

The First Year

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The First Year

by [amooniesong \(orphan_account\)](#)

Summary

George is staying with Dream in Florida for two weeks when a child appears on Dream's doorstep. Suddenly with the responsibility of parenthood on their shoulders, how will the pair cope with their new life?

(Discontinued)

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

Prologue: The First Night

A knock at the door pulled Dream and George from their movie night, and Dream got to his feet before George had a chance to.

“I still don’t understand why you wanted to get *Hawaiian* .” Dream said with a shake of his head. Pineapple didn’t belong on pizza and never would, but he had just ordered pepperoni for himself and moved on without any question. George was staying with him for a fortnight, there wasn’t any reason to argue with him over something as trivial as *pineapple on pizza*. They’d already paid online so he passed by his wallet as he made his way to his door, opening it up with a grin on his face to thank the delivery man.

When he didn’t see the delivery man he paused, confused, before assuming it must’ve just been kids playing around. He gave a gentle shrug of his shoulders and went to close the door when he heard it. The tiniest little sound imaginable, a squeak and a gurgle, and he looked down. On his welcome mat was a small car seat with something inside of it. He kneeled down to twist it around, pushing back the hood of the seat to find the exact opposite of what he’d expected.

There was a *baby* .

“I--” He spluttered, standing back up and walking out onto his front porch, looking up and down the street for any sign of how the child had come to be in front of his door. He couldn’t see anyone walking away alone and couldn’t see any cars that weren’t parked and empty. The child gurgled again and made a soft cooing sound. Dream looked down into the car seat and pushed the blankets covering the child aside, trying to see if there was any way he could identify them. He found a small envelope that was unmarked but sealed, and he tore the corner open before running his thumb across the top to tear the rest.

‘I’m sorry, please look after her for me. I won’t be coming back.’

“Dream, what’s taking so long?” George called from a distance, and Dream looked away from the paper back into his home. What was he supposed to say? How could he explain this to George? His fingers were trembling and he didn’t even realise it, but he guessed that standing on the threshold of his house wasn’t going to solve anything.

He picked up the car seat, another squeak coming from the little girl’s mouth, and carried her inside. As the door clicked closed behind him Dream turned around - George was standing in the archway to his living room looking *very* confused.

“That’s not a pizza, Dream.”

“I am aware of that.” He said blankly. His face must’ve been a picture because George didn’t even begin to tease him, in fact he looked just as shell shocked as Dream did.

“Where did it come from?”

“I don’t know.” Dream said. “She was left there, no name, nothing.” Dream walked past George, moving into his kitchen and resting the car seat on his countertop before he returned to George’s side with the letter he’d opened. “No contact details, nothing. Just a note asking me to look after her. I don’t think I’d even know anyone that’s had a baby recently, she can’t have come from a family or a friend.”

“This sort of stuff doesn’t *happen* in real life, Dream.” George pointed out, despite the fact that it was very obviously happening. “This is some kind of trope you’d see in a cheesy rom-com, it has to be a joke.”

“Well what do we do?” Dream asked. “We can’t leave a baby on my doorstep, who knows what’ll happen to her.”

“We should probably call the police.” George replied after a moment of thought. “She’s not legally yours, someone might try and frame you for kidnapping. Maybe we should get something for her to eat? How long do you think the police would take to look into this? If she’s staying here for a while we need to take care of her.”

Dream turned over his left wrist, glancing at the screen of his apple watch and frowning at the time. The only shop that would be open now was Walmart, and that was a fair drive from his home. Grabbing his keys from their home beside the fruit bowl he offered George a smile.

“Keep her entertained okay? And call the police? I’ll go buy some formula, some diapers, just enough stuff to get us through the night. Maybe by tomorrow we’ll have more of an idea of what we’re doing with this.”

George nodded as Dream left, grabbing his wallet and hurrying out to his car and unlocking it quickly. He barely remembered to pull his seatbelt across his chest as he pressed his foot down on the gas pedal and sped off towards Walmart, his mind running a thousand miles a minute.

What the hell did they even *need* for a baby?

He didn't remember his drive to Walmart at all, the entire journey a blur, but he didn't care how many stoplights he ran as he tried to park as close as possible to the store. He grabbed a shopping cart and headed in, blindly following signs around to try and find everything that the little girl would need. Diapers and formula were a given, it was easy enough to think of that, and Dream found himself reading the labels of every kind of formula in detail. What kind was best? What would help her grow and develop? Why did he care - he was only going to be looking after this child for a night, maybe two. Still, he put the best formula he could find in the cart, before going to look for a bottle and pacifier.

By the time he found himself looking at onesies (for a child he didn't even know the age of) he realised he might have been in a little too deep, but the cart was eventually full of clothes, diapers, wipes and accessories. He'd even bought a soft toy for her to sleep with, and a little playmat for her to spend the day on tomorrow if she was still with them. Dream didn't know much about babies, but he hoped that he'd covered all bases with everything he'd decided to buy.

It cost more than he wanted to admit, and he was glad that he'd parked close as he struggled to carry his bags out, but once everything was in the trunk he felt *good*. This little girl would have several comfortable days with them and whatever happened next, happened next. At least she would be happy.

The drive back was a little slower and safer, his mind no longer in panic mode, but he wondered what had happened to the girl's parents. Had they been in trouble? Had something happened to the family that meant it was unsafe for a child to be present? And why had dropping their daughter on the doorstep of a stranger been a safer alternative to whatever situation they'd been in. The thought troubled him, but he didn't have anywhere to start trying to answer the questions. He supposed that he'd probably never know the answers to them, and that it would probably be best to leave them unasked.

The sun had set by the time Dream had returned - it was the peak of summer and that meant that it didn't get dark until it was fairly late at night. There were no cop cars to be seen, so it was evident that they weren't going to show up any time soon. Dream just grabbed the bags from the back of his car and headed back into his home, calling out when he arrived.

"Sorry it took so long, I had no idea what to get her." Dream closed the door behind him as he spoke, moving through to the kitchen and placing the bags on the counter. There were two pizza boxes lying next to the empty car seat - the pepperoni pizza untouched - and Dream looked around. "George?"

“In here.” George whisper-yelled in response. Dream raised an eyebrow at his tone, walking quietly through to his living room. He was greeted with the little girl lying on George’s chest, her eyes closed and little fists balled up and clinging on to the neck of his shirt. Dream couldn’t help but smile at the way George rested his head gently against hers, and the way that his stomach seemed to do somersaults inside of him at the scene was something he fought to ignore. His feelings for George weren’t important right now, they had to look after this little girl.

“She wasn’t very happy, I rocked her for a bit but I think she wanted a cuddle.” He explained. “She fell asleep very quickly.”

“You never told me you were an expert cuddler, George.” Dream teased quietly, not wanting to wake the sleeping child. “I’m almost jealous.”

“Very funny.” George replied, a hand moving against the little girl’s back and rubbing circles with the tips of his fingers to keep her calm as she slept. There was a long moment of silence between the two of them as Dream simply took in what he was looking at. He’d thought before that he had a crush on George, and that maybe one day they could pursue a relationship of some kind, but seeing him like this? So gentle and caring? He felt his heart squeezing in his chest with adoration. George was one of those people that was just *meant* to be a father, he could feel it.

“I can take her for a bit, if you want? And when she wakes up we can give her some formula. I bought everything I could think of, we should be fine for a couple of days.”

“Mmkay.” George replied, and Dream could hear the exhaustion in his voice. He moved over to him and held his hands out, George carefully slipping the little girl into his hold. He adjusted the crook of his elbow to support her head a little better and he watched as she breathed gently in her sleep. He could see her eyelids moving just a little, her nose scrunching up and her lips smacking together as she adjusted to his hold. Clearly, he wasn’t as comfortable as George’s chest, but she still seemed content and he couldn’t hold back his smile. This little girl was precious and his heart swelled as he held her close.

He wasn’t sure when he started to hum a lullaby, but it couldn’t have been long after he’d started pacing up and down his living room as he rocked her in his arms. Her lips twitched into the tiniest smile as she listened to him in her sleep, and if his eyes glassed over just a little with tears then he wasn’t going to mention it.

George didn’t mention it either when he came back through with a plate of reheated pizza for Dream, and the two of them settled side by side to watch some Netflix whilst she slept. She seemed very happy with her new position on Dream’s chest, nuzzling into the small of his neck and sucking gently on her own thumb as he used one hand to eat his dinner. He didn’t mind, how could he mind when she was so peaceful in his arms? He’d never really thought twice about children, but

having one in his arms he realised just how much he *enjoyed* taking care of someone else. Even when she did eventually wake up and cry to be fed, Dream was more than happy to rock her back and forth as George mixed and heated up the formula for her. Helping her to drink from the bottle and watching as her eyes began to droop shut again was fulfilling in a way he never knew he could feel.

When all was said and done and the night was drawing to a close, Dream took it upon himself to change her diaper and put her in a clean onesie, before carrying her, her blankets and the stuffed toy he'd bought her through to his bedroom. He didn't have anywhere to put her but didn't feel comfortable leaving her in the car seat overnight, so he nestled her in between a pile of pillows and said his goodnights to George before clambering into bed himself. While he might have been a little uncomfortable for the lack of pillows that he now had, he felt her hand wrap tightly around one of his fingers and hold on as she slept.

How was he supposed to be mad about waking up with a sore neck when he had this ray of sunshine beside him?

Month One: July

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Dream hadn't realised just how much work taking care of a baby would be.

It had been easy at first. He'd been awake, so when she cried it had been simple to calm her down and make sure she smiled again, but being jolted awake in the middle of the night to the sound of desperate crying was so much different. Dream didn't have time to think, suddenly filled with fear the longer that her cries went on for, and by the time he reached out to hold her his hands were shaking. Why were his hands shaking? He could *do this*, he'd been just fine before, it was just the same as it had been a few hours ago.

He tucked the little girl close to his chest and leaned over to flip his bedside light on. Her little face was bright red from the strength of her crying and the realisation that he had no idea how to help her hit him quickly.

"Are you hungry?" He asked, aware that his own voice was shaking as panic set in. "How much do babies eat? You had a bottle a little while ago, can you be hungry?" Dream turned his head to squint towards the digital clock blinking on the dresser on the other side of his room. It had been three hours since she'd last eaten, was that normal for babies? He'd always heard stories of parents getting no sleep when children were young, was this why?

Getting to his feet slowly he padded across the carpet of his bedroom, trying to rock her and shush her before he opened his door.

"Hey, don't wake George up alright? You've got me, I'm here, we'll figure this out together." He said softly. His tone was enough to quieten the little girl's cries and for that he was grateful, and as he wandered through his home to his kitchen he pressed a light kiss into her hair. "It's okay, I've got you, you're okay..."

The whispers came naturally to him. Even though he was sure that the child was unable to understand him, maybe the tone would be enough to tell her that she was safe. Clicking the light on in his kitchen was when he began to struggle, having to juggle preparing another bottle of milk with holding a child. He shifted her weight entirely into his left arm and held her firmly against his chest, feeling her head lean against his neck as her cries became quieter still.

"See, I told you we'd figure this out. I'm sorry you're feeling so sad, but you'll have some milk in a

minute.”

Dream added the formula to one of the clean bottles and poured in enough water for it to fill the container. Stirring the powder in with a spoon until it had dissolved, he put it into the microwave and set the timer before devoting his attention entirely to the child once more. He took a closer look at her face as he wiped away the tears from her cheeks, his brows furrowing as her eyes looked up at him sadly. Her attention stayed on him for a few seconds before flitting away to look at the cabinets in the room and he smiled again, his panic from before over and replaced with admiration for the child. She was so little and had already been through so much, and he couldn't imagine *why* she'd been left on his doorstep. Her cries disappeared and were replaced with tiny coos, and Dream started speaking to her softly again.

“What can you see?” He asked, walking around his kitchen and opening up the cabinets to start pulling things out. He grabbed a small mug and held it close to her face, watching as her eyes followed it when he moved it around. “This is a mug, George will have coffee in that when he wakes up because he's still jet lagged and he's reduced himself to drinking coffee.” Dream said with a smile, putting it down on a countertop and making his way to the fruit bowl in the middle of the room and picking up an orange. When he held this up to her face, he could've sworn she giggled.

“That's called an orange, it's a fruit. It's so big, it's as big as your head! *Woah!* ” He told her, bringing it closer to *boop* her nose gently before he pulled it away with a chuckle and put it back where it belonged. “What else is there, *oh, look at this!* ” He said, wandering over to a corkboard that hung on the wall. Usually it was completely unused, but since George had been coming to stay he'd pinned up a selection of things: vouchers for attractions, tickets for shows, places he wanted to show him and takeout menus for dinner. In the top right corner was a picture of George himself, one of the first pictures his friend had sent him, that he had printed out to keep. Maybe it was a little weird, but *sue him* . There'd been a time when George didn't show his face either, and the day he'd finally gotten to see him had been one he didn't want to forget any time soon.

“Can you say George?” He asked, his laugh jostling the baby in his arms just a little. “George, Georgie, *Gogy* .” Dream listed off the nicknames, not minding that the girl couldn't understand or reply. Instead, she just lifted one arm and reached her hand out for the picture, her fingers rubbing over it.

“What're you doing?”

Dream jumped at the voice, being pulled out of *baby mode* and turning to face the corridor George was standing in. He hadn't expected his friend to appear, certainly not when he was showing the baby pictures of him, but then he supposed that she *had* been crying loudly.

“Waiting for milk.” He said sheepishly, as if he’d been caught doing something he shouldn’t have been. Dream moved away from the corkboard and picked up the keys on his counter, hearing excited coos coming from the girl as he jingled them in front of her. “Keeping her occupied so she doesn’t start crying again, I thought you’d managed to sleep through. Sorry.”

George just shrugged at that, walking to the opposite side of the counter and leaning over. He stretched out an arm to tickle one of the girl’s feet with a finger and she instantly kicked, letting out a little squeak in response to his actions. Dream found himself looking at George with his mouth ever so slightly agape, the sleep deprived version of his best friend looking very different than it had the days before.

Jet lagged George had been grumpy, groggy, and quiet in the mornings. Dream understood, and didn’t hold it to him, but he never enjoyed the first hour of the day when George was still too uncomfortable to really do anything. But now, despite being arguably more exhausted than he had been before, he seemed *happy*. The bags under his eyes were hidden by the twinkle that filled them, and the shadow of stubble clinging to his chin and cheeks seemed much sharper as he smiled at the little girl. Even when he brought a fist to his eyes and rubbed at them, and his mouth opened up into a yawn that set off a chain reaction of stretching, Dream couldn’t help but stare at him in awe.

Who the hell gave him the right to be this damn *beautiful* ?

Dream was saved from his thoughts when the microwave pinged, but before he could move towards it George was already pacing across the linoleum and opening the device. As if operating on autopilot, as if this was somehow *normal* for him, he reached in and took out the bottle, using his finger to test the temperature of the milk and frowning.

“It’s a little bit warm, give it a minute.” He said, grabbing the lid but leaving it off for the time being to let it cool faster.

“Thanks.” Dream said, watching as the other moved the container across the counter to him and walked to look at the corkboard. Dream couldn’t help the way that he felt warmth spread across his face and up to the tips of his ears as the older man caught sight of the picture pinned in the corner, a laugh rolling quietly from his lips.

“So the reason you said you didn’t know what I’d do with a picture of you is because you were worried I’d do exactly what you’d done?”

“Shut up, that’s not the case at all.” Dream said, the smile evident in his tone as he tried to play it

off. “I put it up so I’d remember what you looked like when I picked you up from the airport, I haven’t paid attention to any of your Snapchats so I’d forgotten.”

“Pfft, yeah.” George said, turning to face him again. Thankfully, George said nothing about the colour of Dream’s face, or just how *hot* he was as he sidled up to Dream and stood beside him to coo over the child in his arms.

“You can go back to bed if you’re tired, and tomorrow if you don’t want to deal with all of this I can recommend some good places to go on your own. I could probably still come down to the beach in the afternoon and we could grab dinner together?”

“I’m here to see you. Sure I didn’t think that meant I’d spent a day in a police station with an abandoned baby when I accepted your invite, but things happen.” He shrugged. As George offered the girl a finger she grabbed hold of it tightly with her free hand, shaking both arms up and down as she jingled the keys and tugged on George. Dream felt another hearty laugh leave his lips at her actions, and he realised that handing the baby to someone else tomorrow would be incredibly difficult.

But he couldn’t just *keep* a baby, could he?

After a moment, George looked up at Dream and gestured to the girl with his head. “Can I hold her?” He asked, and Dream handed her over gently. His arms felt somehow heavier without her presence, so he busied himself with preparing the bottle for her and handing it to George. He paced out of the kitchen and back to his bedroom, grabbing his phone from where it lay charging. He swiped his thumb over the home button as he unlocked it, walking back to keep George company as he sent a text and started searching a few things.

“Am I that bad company that you don’t want to talk to me at 2am?”

“What do you think of Rose?”

George blinked at the question, and before he really had time to process it and respond another followed.

“Maybe Lily? I think she looks more like a Lily than a Rose.”

“Dream, you’re not going to be able to guess her name.”

“No, but I feel like I can’t just call her *baby* forever. She’ll grow up one day.”

George’s eyes didn’t leave Dream as he continued scrolling through the website he was on, trying to figure out what it could be. It looked like a long list more than anything else and when it hit him, he found his jaw dropping.

“Are you seriously thinking about keeping her?”

Dream was quiet for a moment, before he looked up at George and tried to gauge his reaction. He couldn’t tell, he was too tired himself to understand what that look meant, and he was too tired to beat around the bush with his reply.

“Yeah.” He said honestly. “I... I *like* looking after her. I know it’s only been a couple of hours but it’s like an instinct. I just feel *good* when I’m holding her, like I can protect her and make her happy and keep her safe, and she’s already been left by one set of parents. If I don’t take her in, what’ll happen to her? She’ll get shoved through the system and unless she’s lucky enough to be adopted she’ll probably have a pretty shit life being moved around until she ages out.”

George blinked a few times as he took in Dream’s reply, wondering if he *was* still asleep, before he looked down to the little girl in his arms. What was he supposed to do? Talk his friend out of it? Say that he didn’t know the first thing about being a parent and that he should be living his life rather than looking after a child. He wasn’t even old enough to drink yet, and here he was considering taking in a child? Would he regret missing out on the years he could have spent partying?

But instead, when he did find his voice again, those weren’t the words he said at all.

“How long can I stay in the US?”

Dream found himself grinning from ear to ear as he looked up from his phone, typing in a quick search on his browser.

“What visa do you have? This one says a B1/B2 visa lets you stay for up to 180 days.” Dream replied. *6 months*. 6 months with George at his side, it seemed unreal, the entire situation seemed

unreal. “You don’t have to, but if you wanted to you *could* stay that long. I’d be fine with it.”

“Okay.” George said, offering Dream a smile. “Alright, well, maybe I won’t make the decision at 2:15 in the morning, but I can’t see any reason why it *wouldn’t* work.” He said.

They fell back into a comfortable silence, Dream googling more about visas and childcare, and George letting Lily drink until she’d finished her bottle, before shifting his hold to pat her back softly until she burped over his shoulder. As the wind left her system she quickly fell asleep in his arms once more and the two returned to Dream’s bedroom. George placed Lily down into the same cocoon of pillows as before and Dream covered her with a blanket before bidding his friend goodnight again, promising that he didn’t have to get up again if she woke in the night.

Dream’s eyes were shut before he had the chance to lay down on his mattress, and with an arm resting over Lily protectively he fell asleep quickly.

#

When morning came, George felt the heat of the Floridian summer clinging to him unbearably already. The morning was particularly humid, too, and he’d already worked up a sweat just from changing into clean clothes. He dreaded what the weather would be like outside if it was like this *inside*, and he wandered through Dream’s home to find his friend sitting in the living room with Lily. He’d taken the playmat he’d purchased from the box and spread it out on the floor, and the little girl was now thoroughly enjoying herself as she lay on her back and explored all the wonderful toys on offer. There was a colour mobile, a mirror, fabric that crinkled and little plastic shapes that shook, and her hands raised above her head to bat at the objects dangling before her. Each time she heard a new noise she squealed with delight, her legs kicking up in the air and Dream watching her with a grin on his face.

“Morning, dad.” George said from where he stood. It was enough to get Dream to laugh uncontrollably, and his reaction made Lily gurgle louder.

“Help yourself to breakfast, have you had any calls from the cops?”

George pulled his phone from his pocket and let the screen light up, shaking his head before turning to make his way through to the kitchen and grab some fruit. “Nothing yet. I guess they’ll call us when they want us to come down and speak to them?”

Dream nodded even though George couldn't see him, his focus entirely on the little girl before him. He'd been trying so hard not to get his hopes up in case there were protocols and procedures that mean they couldn't take care of her, but he'd sign whatever paperwork he had to in order to keep her. So far this morning he'd changed her diaper twice, his shirt once after she'd thrown up on him, and spent thirty minutes walking around his back garden with her in his arms to try and get her to stop crying without waking up George, and he wouldn't change it for the world.

When George came back into the living room he joined Dream lying on the floor, on the other side of the playmat, and he grinned as Lily's attention turned to him.

"Hi." He said softly, in the voice he'd found that his stream found entertaining.

"Hi." Dream replied.

"Hi."

"Hi!"

"Hello!"

"Hiya!"

The two spoke back and forth for several minutes. They didn't *usually* sit and say hello to each other for that long, but after the first few seconds Lily had begun to let out the tiniest of giggles and the sound had been so light and pure that the two had simply continued. She was so happy, and how could they stop doing something that made her smile so widely?

Dream eventually left to grab the two of them a drink, leaving George alone to play with Lily as he busied himself in the kitchen. While he had a moment to himself he rinsed out the bottles he'd used to feed Lily so far and loaded up the dishwasher, putting it on for a quick run so he didn't find himself without a way to feed her later in the evening. He took the two glasses of squash back through to the living room, setting them on the table and sitting on the sofa himself. George was content with continuing to play with Lily, and so Dream switched over to the news just to be *vaguely* aware of what was going on around the world before he lost track of time completely.

The morning went by steadily enough, neither wanting to stray too far from the air conditioned

house, and before either of them knew it lunchtime had rolled around. It seemed that Lily was *definitely* aware it was lunchtime, because she was no longer enjoying herself. It had happened in a flash, the change from beaming to sobbing, but the two men had reacted quickly. George picked her up in an instant, holding her close to his shoulder and rocking her back and forth as he shushed her.

“Dream, can you get her a bottle?” He asked, raising his voice just a little over her crying before he returned to his soft tone. As George heard his footsteps walking away to do as he’d asked, he let himself press his lips together and hum a gentle tune in Lily’s ear.

As Lily found herself pressed against his shoulder, her lips pressed against his shirt and started to suckle hungrily as she tried to latch on. George struggled to keep himself in check as he brought a hand to her head, running through her hair to try and console her. His heart was breaking to hear her so unhappy, even if he knew it was only temporary. His humming became a fraction more structured and after a minute he was no longer just humming soft notes to her, but the opening of *The Lord of the Rings*. He’d remembered playing it on his recorder on stream, and Lily seemed to like the sound of it. Her cries became quieter still and one hand latched onto George’s earlobe, pinching it tightly between her fingers as she tried to soothe herself.

“Ow, be gentle, sweetheart.” George said quietly, breaking his tune for just a moment as he pulled her fingers carefully from his ear and let her hold his hand instead.

When Dream returned with a bottle he took the little girl into his own arms, settling on the sofa with her and bringing the bottle to her lips. Immediately she latched on and started greedily sucking the formula, her tiny hands moving to try and hold the bottle herself. As Dream sat quietly, his fingers running through her hair as he watched her drink, George’s phone rang and he stepped into the kitchen to leave the two in peace as he spoke.

Dream could hear fragments of the conversation, and was relieved when he heard that it *was* the police he was talking to. He tuned out a little after that, watching Lily as her nose scrunched up.

Much like before, Lily drank the bottle quickly and was starting to fall asleep after she’d drank. Dream supposed that wasn’t necessarily a bad thing, it would be a lot easier to get to the police station if she wasn’t kicking and crying. He let the little girl fall asleep on his shoulder, listening to her breathing as he waited for George to come back through and let him know what they needed to do. It was almost peaceful enough that he could fall asleep with her, and his eyes steadily drooped shut until he heard footsteps approaching him and George’s voice cutting through the silence.

“They want us to head on down this afternoon, ask us a few questions about how we found her. You’ve still got the note, right?” George asked, and Dream nodded.

“It’s in the car seat they left her in, that’s all she had. Just the car seat, some blankets, and the note.” He said. It hurt to say it aloud, to think of how terrible of a condition the girl had been left in. What if they hadn’t been there, if they’d been out for the afternoon or even if Dream had gone to the UK instead of the other way around? What if someone had taken her, or it had rained? Dream hated the surge of worries that he felt, so he instead stood up and wandered through to the kitchen to strap her into the car seat. The drive down wouldn’t take too long and, hopefully, everything would be sorted soon.

“You don’t have to come.” Dream said, but as George slipped his shoes on he shook his head.

“I called them, they’ll probably be a bit concerned if I *don’t* show up.” He said, turning to look at Dream who, somehow, had become the most attractive man alive in the last few moments.

He wasn’t particularly well dressed, wearing one of his own t-shirts and a pair of shorts to cope with the heat, his hair was messy and he’d grown stubble over the past few days. But he stood there with the car seat in his hand and Lily fast asleep, tucked under the blankets, and George couldn’t deny the way his heart raced seeing this side of his friend. Kind, caring, protective and *fatherly*. It wasn’t the way he’d expected his trip to go, but he loved it.

The two left the cool house and found themselves assaulted by the afternoon temperature, both squinting up at the sky. Clouds on the horizon threatened to rain and bring much needed relief to the pair, so they quickly made their way down to Dream’s care and spent the better part of the next thirty minutes figuring out how the car seat worked.

They assumed it had come with instructions originally, but they didn’t *have* those instructions, and ended up finding a tutorial on YouTube to make sure she was safely strapped in before they climbed into the front side by side, Dream slipping on a pair of sunglasses and winding their windows down before beginning to drive. With Lily sleeping, they neglected to put on any music, but conversation flowed easily between the odd direction that George gave en-route and before they knew it they were parked in the lot behind the police station and walking in with a still sleeping Lily in tow.

Dream didn’t know what to expect when they arrived, George giving the reference number of the call he’d logged and the name of the officer he’d spoken to, before they were asked to wait for a few minutes before being seen. The whole thing was so surreal and Dream still couldn’t shake the fact that it *was* real. He’d hoped to be given some answers when they were eventually invited into a small office with a few dozen fake potted plants littered across the surfaces, and a fan blowing cool air around the room.

Answers, it seemed, weren't going to be given. Instead, they recounted the story of her appearance and informed the officer how they had been caring for her overnight, the things they had bought for her, and the time they had spent with her. When Lily woke up, Dream had unbuckled her from the car seat and pulled her into his arms, letting her fidget and tug at his hair to her heart's content. While they spoke with the officer she cooed and giggled happily, and Dream smiled even when she did tug particularly hard.

When the officers explained that they'd need to take a DNA sample from Lily to help trace her parents and get in contact with them, Dream and George found themselves speaking in hushed tones to the little girl to keep her from dissolving into hysterics when a swab of saliva was taken from inside her mouth. It wasn't particularly invasive, and they were both thankful for that with how loudly she was crying anyway, and George took a turn to hold and rock her back into a state of calm as Dream began providing ID and contact details. They'd offered to take Lily off their hands and save them any more trouble, but Dream had made it clear that if her parents truly *couldn't* care for her, that he would be more than willing to take her in and legally adopt her. The conversation had hit George squarely in the chest: it seemed much more real to discuss it now than it had at 2 o'clock in the morning, but there was nothing else he'd have expected from Dream.

The three left a little over 90 minutes after they arrived, with a promise to be in touch as soon as they had any information as to who the little girl was, but for now the name Lily had stuck. On the way home they stopped at Walmart again and this time searched the aisles for things that were more permanent structures. Instead of relying on pillows and blankets to prop her up, they bought a cot and a pram, and as they were about to leave the aisle (having made notes of other pieces of furniture to order online), George spotted something that he suggested as a joke.

"A papoose?" Dream asked, raising his eyebrows and looking at George. He could tell by the way that George was giggling (something that made Dream's heart flutter, though he stored that information away for later) that it had been made in jest, but Dream quickly saw the benefits of having one.

It meant that they didn't need to take the pram everywhere, and he could have both hands free if he was trying to carry her *and* do something. Really, it just made sense to get one.

Dream added it to the cart and pushed it with all of his strength, having underestimated badly just how heavy all the boxes would have been. When they paid for everything and took it outside, it took a few minutes to load the boot, and Lily had fallen asleep once again. At least without having to worry about her crying, the two had been able to grunt and moan as much as they desired while they struggled to fit everything in.

Neither of them commented about how hearing the other like that made them feel.

By the time they arrived home, evening had well and truly set in. It was 6pm and they found that they faced a conundrum.

Sapnap wanted to speedrun, he wanted Dream to coach him through it and George to be there with him to laugh at his mistakes. He would be streaming, and the fans always loved it when the three of them were together, but the crib needed building and someone needed to watch Lily.

Dream supposed this was going to be a good first outing for the papoose.

George offered to build the crib as quickly as he could and would join Dream at his set-up when he had the chance. Before sitting down at his desk, Dream slipped the sleeping Lily into the sling and tightened the straps around his back and shoulders to make sure she was securely held against his chest. He made up a bottle of formula for when she awoke, leaving it beside the microwave ready to be heated up so that she didn't cry for too long, before sending Sapnap a text that he was logging on to Team Speak.

Lily was still asleep as Dream settled into his chair, putting his headphones over one ear and bringing his hands to rest on her back. His fingers absentmindedly rubbed small patterns against her as he waited for the familiar message to echo into his ears.

"User entered your channel."

"Dreamie poo! Hey, how're things going with George?"

"Hi Sapnap." Dream laughed a little, closing his eyes and letting himself lean back. He was just now starting to realise how tired he was from his lack of sleep the night before, and let out a yawn before replying. "George is good, he's building."

"Building?" Sapnap asked, laughing. "I thought he was coming to visit, not build an extension for your place."

"Shut up, he's building some furniture. His idea, though I almost wish he was teaching you how to speedrun. It'd be a disaster."

"Haha." Sapnap said, his tone deadpan. "Well whatever he's building, tell him to hurry up and get in here. You *know* the stream's gonna go crazy about the fact that you two are in the same place,

right?”

“Oh, before we start, can you watch your language?”

“What, is Bad joining us too?” The pair laughed, and Dream decided he might as well tell Sapnap the truth.

“Just got some little ears here that I don’t want to hear your foul mouth.”

“What?” Sapnap didn’t know what Dream meant at all by that, shaking his head as Dream saw the tweet for his stream going up. “You babysitting or something?”

“Something like that, I suppose.” Dream replied. “Someone left a baby on my doorstep, I’m looking after her for a bit. She’s asleep at the moment.”

“No way dude, what’s *actually* going on?”

Dream was silent for a minute, grabbing his phone from his pocket and taking a selfie to send to Sapnap of him with a finger on his lips and the sleeping infant on his chest, and he heard something between a laugh of disbelief and a squeal of delight from Sapnap when he opened the picture. Whatever the sound was, he’d certainly never heard it from the other man before.

“Shut *up* , you’ve actually got a kid?”

“George is building a cot now, she showed up last night and the police are trying to find out where she came from, but if the parents don’t want her then I said I’d take her in.”

“Dude that’s awesome, I’m an Uncle now!” He exclaimed. “I’m her first Uncle, I’m gonna teach her *all* the swear words I know. Oh, guessing I shouldn’t mention it on stream?”

“Yeah, just want to keep it on the low-down for now. Maybe her parents will change their mind. She’s asleep anyway, I might have to go and heat up some milk for her when she wakes up but for now I’m good to go. Just try not to yell too loudly, I don’t want her to get an earache because you get blown up by creepers.”

“Sure thing, daddy Dream.” Sapnap joked, hitting the button to go live on Twitch and sending out the link to his Twitter. He watched as viewers joined them, loading up a world and starting to run and jump around.

“Hello, hi everyone, sorry I’ve not streamed in a while. I’ve got Dream here to make it up for you all.”

“Hi.” Dream said, his smile widening as he thought about just how happy Lily had been earlier in the day when he and George had their back and forth. Was this what parenthood was? Remembering the good moments and just *smiling* ? His heart felt as if it could burst as he looked down at the sleeping girl against his chest, watching her lips smack together as she brought a thumb closer to her and sucked on it quietly. As Sapnap introduced the stream he settled back into his seat, knowing that he’d be there for some time.

#

Lily managed to stay asleep for the first twenty minutes of the stream. Sapnap wasn’t speedrunning yet, just practicing the techniques needed to do it. Dream had him spawning into worlds time after time and getting him used to going into F5 mode and checking all angles speedily to look for biomes, ruined portals, and villages. When he did spot them, Dream told him how best to use each to his advantage.

When Lily woke up she was quiet, but Dream wasn’t taking any chances. He told Sapnap to keep practicing what he’d been doing and muted himself before going to heat up her milk. He could feed her while he sat on stream and spoke, so he wouldn’t be gone long enough to raise suspicions about his absence.

Setting back into the chair a few minutes later, Dream arrived just in time to see Sapnap failing at his self proclaimed *door-strats* , and laughed before unmuting his microphone.

“Hey, I’m back.” He said. “Anything happen while I was gone?”

“Nope.” Sapnap lied, though the chat was very quickly telling on him. Dream chuckled quietly as he read the messages on his screen, placing the bottle down on his desk as he unclasped the papoose and shifted Lily in his arms so she was in a more comfortable position to feed.

While she hadn't started crying just yet, she seemed more than happy to eat, her eyes flitting around Dream's bedroom and taking in the different things on display. She was particularly interested in his microphone, her hands often raising above her head and making an attempt to grab it. Dream just moved it out of her reach and chuckled to himself.

"What, did I miss something?" Sapnap's voice came through the headphones, and Dream cursed himself silently for catching himself out.

"No, I just saw a funny tweet." He lied. "I'll send it to you after the stream. Want to practice in the Nether a bit?"

As Lily finished her bottle, Dream talked Sapnap through each of the different biomes. The advantages and disadvantages, the mobs that could be found and the spawn rate, and where Nether Fortresses had the best chance of appearing. By the time the explanation drew to a close, Lily was resting on his shoulder and he was tapping her back softly so that the sound wasn't picked up on his microphone. What he hadn't considered, however, was that her tiny burp *would* be. When the noise escaped he heard the smallest laugh imaginable from Sapnap, who stopped ingame at the shock of the moment.

"Excuse you, Dream."

"Shut up." Dream replied, rolling his eyes as he watched the chat fly by. Everyone was wondering why Dream had made a noise that small, but no one had come to the correct answer just yet. He just ignored it and went back to coaching Sapnap while Lily rested on his chest. She had been distracted from his microphone and was now focusing on his hair again, something Dream had realised quickly she was fascinated with. Maybe he'd need to buy some ties to hold it in place for the time being, just until she became a little less grabby. He forced himself not to wince audibly as she pulled particularly hard, but realised that it was hopeless when she cooed loudly at him.

The noise was adorable, and while it was enough to melt Dream's heart he *was* aware that there was no way in hell his microphone hadn't picked the sound up. Well, he supposed there would be no going back now. Still, if no one mentioned it he'd keep quiet.

There were a few messages in that chat that Dream saw mentioning the word *baby* as they whizzed by, but it wasn't until Lily made a second sound that it really seemed to catch on.

"Right, Piglins, you're best to throw down your gold to lure them all into one place then dig away the blocks beneath them. They'll stay in the pit and then it's easier to gather resources and give them more gold, and they can't see you if you're mining nearby which is useful. Always have at

least gold boots on. You can trade armour with them, too, so if you had more than one piece of gold armour from a portal chest then you can give them whatever's offering less protection."

"Hi Sapnap ily. Also Dream isn't George visiting you, did you code it so he's a baby now?"

The donation took Dream by surprise and he chuckled to himself as he heard it, Lily letting out a little squeal as she felt herself shaking on her father's chest.

"Yes, I shrunk George into a baby."

"Honey, Dream shrunk the kids!" Sapnap called, and as the two of them laughed Lily continued to coo and gurgle - all the sounds she made picked up by Dream's microphone. So much for keeping her a secret from the community. He supposed it would always have happened, but maybe if he'd let George watch her while he was building the crib in the other room he could've at least kept his secret for the night.

Who was he kidding, George with a hammer *and* a baby was just an accident waiting to happen.

"I have acquired a child." Dream explained, keeping the phrasing as vague as possible. He knew that people would find it funny to speculate, and he couldn't wait to see the jokes on Twitter that came from it. "Her name is Lily, she's very happy to meet you all, and she's been pulling my hair *really* roughly all stream and I've been trying to keep quiet. Naughty corner for Lily tonight."

As the chat was filled with a mixture of confusion, disbelief, expletives and *awws*, Dream found himself feeling a little more at ease. Now that he wasn't trying to keep her in the shadows he just let her make the noises she wanted and held her up to the microphone as she made them.

"As you can hear, she's a very talky girl. George is building a cot for her to sleep in tonight so she's not going to be stealing all my pillows again. We had to make a little nest so she was comfortable."

"Dream, that is *adorable* ." Sapnap laughed. "I can't believe I'm streaming with you, and you're not even the most popular person anymore."

"Shut up, I'm way more popular." Dream laughed. The donations and chat proved otherwise, though, with people asking to say hello to Lily and Dream lifting her towards the microphone to try

and prompt her to coo and gurgle.

When Sapnap eventually returned to the Overworld and began to search for a Stronghold, he began to boat across an ocean. A few minutes into the journey night fell, and his boat was hit by a trident.

“Argh! A gurgler!” He called out, and Dream suddenly found himself wheezing in his chest.

“My daughter is *not* a monster!” He said, the tears in his eyes evident as he put two and two together. She gurgled, she was a *gurgler*. “Say sorry to her right now, otherwise she’ll never learn the name *Uncle Sapnap* in her life.”

“Aww, c’mon daddy Dreamie, you don’t mean that. I’m sorry Lily, you’re the cutest little thing there is.”

Daddy Dreamie only had Dream laughing harder, and he could hear Lily making giggles of her own. The chat, understandably, had completely lost it with the series of events and clips began appearing quickly. Lily the Gurgler, Uncle Sapnap, and Daddy Dreamie were all *goldmines* that Twitter was going to have a field day with. But Dream didn’t care. They could say whatever they wanted about him, all that mattered to him right now was how happy his friends were and how smiley Lily was.

It was a minute later that George appeared at Dream’s side, pulling a second chair up by the desk and plugging in a second set of headphones before he spoke.

“What’s going on, did Sapnap die? Oh, *please* tell me Sapnap died.”

“Hey! George, that’s so mean! What kind of impression are you trying to set for your daughter?” Sapnap asked, trying to make his tone sound as harsh as possible, but George simply found himself choking on his words.

“Sorry, *what?!* ” He spluttered. “No, she’s not my daughter, I’m just *helping* out.”

“Yeah, George could *never* be a daddy.” Dream said, his voice strained even now as he tried to calm himself down. He couldn’t remember laughing quite this hard since *the trap* , though the laugh seemed to disappear in an instant the moment that Lily started crying.

“Oh, hey, what’s up?” Dream said, quickly composing himself as he started to rock Lily back and forth. “Hey, *hey Lil*, what’s up? Is it stinky Georgie? Is he making you all sad?” He asked, trying to laugh just a little but finding himself unable to as she cried.

He took back what he’d said before. Parenthood wasn’t just the good moments, it was the painfully heartbreaking ones too.

“I think *she’s* the stinky one, Dream.” George said, holding his arms out for her and taking the little girl into his own hold. Resting her against his shoulder he could immediately smell what he thought he had. “Yup, *someone* has a sappy-nappy. I’ll go change her.”

As George stood up to leave the room, Dream began to wheeze and gasp for air, his laugh coming out strangled and strained like even he’d never heard before. Sapnap’s fist colliding with the desk and his outraged *WHAT* coming through the headphones only made it worse. The chat had found the phrase just as hilarious: a *sappy nappy*, that would *never* be lived down.

“I’m changing my name back to Pandas right now, what the *fuck* ?! You are not naming your kids diapers after me, that’s bullying!”

“Yeah, probably child abuse to name anything about her after you.” Dream laughed, tears rolling down his cheeks as he panted desperately for air. “I’m gonna die, I’m *actually* gonna die, holy *shit* .”

“Honestly, you deserve it, naming your kid’s diaper after me, I am *never* gonna hear the end of this! The fanart that’s going to be drawn, have you *any idea* what you’ve done?” He laughed, and as he did his screen turned red and he realised he’d been killed during their amusement.

“Fuck!” He yelled, sitting back in his chair and just listening to Dream laugh for the next few minutes.

Sapnap checked how long he’d been streaming and sighed, shaking his head as he started to move his character around the screen again.

“Right, I think that’s it for the stream tonight. I’ll go through dono’s and read everything just in case I missed something, and I’ll try to get Dream to tweet once he’s stopped laughing just so you all know he *didn’t* die.”

As Dream listened to Sapnap closing off his stream, George came back into the bedroom with Lily in his arms and Dream stopped laughing. It was late, he was tired, and his *daughter* was curled up in George's arms peacefully. She smiled and kicked a little, and George had the softest smile he'd ever seen on his own face. It took absolutely everything in Dream not to stand up and kiss him where he stood, and he swallowed as George sat beside him.

"Stream's over." Dream said gently, unplugging his headphones and pulling his microphone between them as they remained on the call with Sapnap.

They talked for a few more hours together, with Lily falling asleep in George's hold and then, eventually, George falling asleep in his chair. Dream took the infant through to the guest bedroom and placed her in the newly built cot, swaddling her with blankets and placing the stuffed animals that had been bought in the corner of the cot for her. As he left the room he flipped the light switch and made his way to his own bedroom. Somehow, George had woken up for just long enough to move to Dream's bed and fall asleep there, and Dream wondered if he thought he was in his own room in England. Dream was too tired to care, he just turned his own lights off and collapsed into bed beside George.

Neither of them mentioned it to the other when they woke up to Lily's crying in the middle of the night. And when they crawled back to bed together when she was asleep again, that wasn't mentioned either.

As the nights passed it became less of an accident, and eventually when more furniture arrived for Lily the guest bedroom took on the title of *Lily's room*, and there was no longer a second bed for George to sleep in.

It was a week before they heard anything back from the police about Lily. Her parents had been traced and contacted using her medical records, and they weren't in a position to take care of the girl anymore. So Dream went down to the station and spent a day being vetted, screened, and signing every piece of paperwork under the sun. It was a long day, his fingers were covered in papercuts and his eyes were sore, but he could say - with more than just pride filling his heart - that he was now *officially* the father of Lily.

Lily, it turned out, had been born on May 14th. She was a little over two months old, and absolutely adored her father. Dream had taken to her instantly, and the relief he'd shown when he'd finally signed everything to legally take the role as her guardian was second to none. George had watched the worry in his face over the first few days when he had grown more attached but hadn't heard back from the police as to whether or not he would be able to keep her, and he was so much more relaxed and happy now that he knew he could. He'd bought paint, bookshelves, rugs, picture frames and mobiles for her bedroom and had set aside a weekend to spend redecorating. Of course

it would have been easier to decorate if they'd had notice about her, but she had been the most wonderful surprise he'd ever been given.

It was strange how quickly his home had gone from neat, organised, and tidy to being a mess of toys, diapers, and bottles. Dream had let his stubble grow into a short beard and had his hair regularly tied up in a loose bun to save strong fingers pulling at it.

George's flight home came and went. There was no discussion about him staying, only a discussion of buying new clothes so he could cope with the weather for the next couple of months. There wasn't a discussion about their sleeping arrangements either, they'd found that Dream's bed was more than big enough for the two of them to sleep in together and the humid nights managed to keep the two of them from tangling for the most part.

On one particularly stormy morning, when the thunder rumbled loud enough to wake Lily from her sleep, Dream rolled out of bed to comfort Lily. He and George had developed a good routine to make sure they could both get the sleep they needed even when she was upset, and it was his turn to get out of bed. As he walked from his bedroom to hers, he heard her crying lessen and wondered if she'd managed to knock one of her toys a little closer so she at least had some comfort. Dream opened the door to her room and turned the overhead light on slowly (he'd re-wired the light to be controlled by a dimmer switch), before his eyes caught sight of something that made his heart melt - something he thought was completely impossible after the weeks before. How he even had a heart left in his chest at this point baffled him, and as he felt tears rising in his eyes he called out to George.

"George? Can you come in here?"

Dream grabbed his phone from his pajama pockets and snapped a quick photo, just in case Patches decided to leave before George made the short walk to Lily's room, but she remained blissfully still.

Patches had heard Lily crying and had jumped into her crib, curling up at her side and purring softly to calm her down. As George stood at Dream's side, he reached out with a hand to grab his shoulder and pointed to the pair of them. He heard the tiniest gasp leave George's lips and turned his head away from his daughter to look at George. Dream couldn't shake the adoration on his face, and was saved from being caught only by the fact that George was baffled by how adorable the scene before them was.

"Patches, you're such a good girl." George cooed softly, wandering over to the crib and leaning in to scratch her head. As thunder rumbled again he saw Lily begin to blubber once more, but Patches began to lick her hair as if she were cleaning one of her own kittens. Dream took another photo - this time of the three of them together - before going to let Patches out and grab Lily himself.

“You can head back to bed if you want, I’ve got her.”

“It’s fine, I’ll get us some coffee. It’ll be fun to watch the storm together.”

So the three of them spent the last day of July on the sofa, the blinds looking out into the back garden open and revealing a wonderful show of lightning while Dream and George sipped on their coffee, Lily cooed in their hold, and Patches purred by their side.

It wasn’t how Dream had expected the month to go - he’d been planning on spending two weeks with his best friend and *maybe* admitting his feelings, but instead he’d had almost an entire month with George by his side, become a father to the most wonderful little girl, and had kept his emotions painfully close to his chest.

Well, there was always next month.

Chapter End Notes

hey look, sometimes i do this freaky thing called "fluff"? i think that's how you pronounce it? anyway get ready for some sickly sweet moments because i ADORE this fic, i think i'm going to be writing it alongside "this is the end" when i need a break from all the war & hate (but probably won't be updating as often haha, it's 3am now & i can't be doing this every day!)

each chapter is going to be covering the highlights of each month, so next chapter will be august & lily will be three months old! if you have any particular moments you'd like to see between these three let me know & i'd be glad to try & include some!

Month Two: August

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

August started much the same way as July had ended. Hot, humid, and stormy. Lily didn't like storms in the slightest, the noises were too loud for her poor little ears to handle & whenever it began to thunder she *needed* to be in the arms of either Dream or George. Neither of them minded terribly, always happy for an excuse to hold their little one close, but seeing her unhappy never failed to break their hearts.

Dream was sitting with her that morning, his fingers running through her hair as he perched on the edge of the sofa and rocked his body forwards and backwards to try and offer her some respite from her anxiety.

"It's so sorry you don't like all the horrible noises. I wish I could make the storms stop." He said gently, her pathetic little hiccupy cries hurting him even more than her loud sobs did. When she was too tired to even continue crying, *that* was what got him the most.

It was the only time he didn't love being a father.

When George emerged from the kitchen with a mug of coffee in a handmade mug (they'd bought a kit on Amazon a week ago and had covered Lily's hand with paint, pressing hand prints onto two mugs and glazing them), he looked at the pair with sad eyes.

"She'll be okay." George said. "She'll learn there's nothing to be afraid of soon, especially since she's got such a brave daddy."

Dream smiled at George thankfully, the gratitude in his eyes shining and painting more words than his mouth ever could, before he felt Lily being taken out of his arms.

"I thought the blue one was yours." Dream said, taking the coffee and bringing the mug to his lips. Domestic life with George wasn't something he'd expected to slip into so easily - especially not given his feelings for the other man - but it had happened quickly. Any anxiety he'd had about expressing his emotions to George that he'd expected to keep him on edge had vanished: keeping up with Lily was too exhausting to worry about how he felt for the man. Instead he just admired him silently, and as he started bouncing Lily on his knee now was one of those times.

“It is, but the red one’s in the dishwasher and I didn’t have a chance to put it on last night. Don’t worry, I’ve not done anything to it.” George smiled, leaning back against the cushion and looking at Lily with a smile on his face. “Hiya sweetie, are you being a brave girl for me today? No more crying about thunderstorms, you’re so brave!” He cooed, wiping away a few stray tears with his thumb before leaning in and pressing his lips to her cheek. Instead of kissing her, he blew a raspberry and immediately Lily *squealed* with delight, her little legs kicking up and down at the sensation.

“She loves it when you do that.” Dream commented, leaning back against the sofa to watch the pair playing together.

“I figured out what it is, it’s the stubble.” George said proudly. “It tickles her.”

“Your stubble looks stupid.” Dream said, rolling his eyes. “It’s not your stubble, that’s your argument to keep it.”

“It is, seriously Dream, watch.” He said. He shifted his position just a little so he could support her with one arm, his free hand taking hers and lifting her arm up before he leaned down with his chin and rubbed the beginnings of facial hair up and down her arm.

Again, Lily was overjoyed, smiling and giggling away at the action, and Dream felt himself smile.

“It still looks stupid.”

In this case, *stupid* translated fairly well into *attractive* , but one of those was a lot easier to say to his friend.

As if to mark the end of the conversation, Dream heard a knock at the door and got to his feet, socks padding away against the carpet and then the wood as he answered. A package that needed signing for, that was odd. Dream couldn’t remember ordering anything lately, but he’d discovered that the *baby brain* he’d heard about while browsing web pages online in the first few weeks was real, and it could be anything in the little brown package.

“What’s that?” George asked as he wandered back through, and Dream was at least glad that if they *had* ordered anything, he’d forgotten about it to.

“No idea, maybe it’s a huge box of chocolates.”

“Or two years worth of diapers.”

Dream tsked at that, using his door keys to slice the tape that sealed the parcel.

“Like you could fit two years of diapers in this box.”

When he opened it and pushed past the foam he let himself laugh, pulling the soft toy out of the box and admiring it before he turned it around for George to see.

“What’s that?” He asked, leaning forwards to get a better look before he too began to laugh. “Oh, that’s *brilliant*.” George reached out with his free hand and took the toy from Dream and gave it a little squeeze. It was soft to the touch, the pink fluff silky smooth and the clothes the pig was dressed in were made out of cotton. As George held it close to Lily she reached out for it curiously, her fingers grabbing at the red cloak curiously.

“Aww, he sent a note too.” Dream smiled, placing the box down on the edge of the coffee table and sitting back beside George, tucking his legs underneath the rest of his body. “*You’re the best thing to happen to that orphan.*”

“Techno had this made?” George asked, leaning over to peer at the handwritten note. “I suppose now you’re a DILF he’s got another reason to simp for you?”

The wheeze that left Dream’s lips at George’s comment was enough to make Lily jump a little in George’s arms, and that was enough to set him off too. Their laughter was contagious and before they knew it, Lily had joined in with her own giggles. They weren’t the same as they had been a month ago - now they were much fuller and brighter as she’d figured out how to laugh properly. Her hands held the little Technoblade plushie tightly and after a moment in which her hands loosened just a little, there was a squeak.

“Oh my God, *Dream, it makes noises!*” George exclaimed, his laughter stopping as he gently pressed his thumb and forefinger over Lily’s hand to squish the toy again. “Hear that sweetie? You’re doing that! Can you say *squeak*?”

Dream snorted, leaning down to press a kiss to Lily’s forehead and realising that his head was

dangerously close to George's legs. He was almost tired enough from the last few days to place his head against his thighs but he didn't. That wouldn't have been a good idea.

"Let me get a picture for Twitter." Dream said, pulling his phone from his pocket and sliding across to the camera app. "Lily, can you hold Techno tightly again?"

Lily wasn't paying attention, how could a three month old be expected to pose on demand? But George shifted the position they sat in and angled the soft toy so it sat beneath her fingers.

Dream took several pictures - a couple further away of George, Lily, and the toy for his own personal collection of photos, and one much closer. It focused on the toy that Techno had made for her, but included her hand so that the fans could see that he really *wasn't* lying about having a baby. He'd seen so much on Twitter about how it had all been a stunt for clout, and while he'd sent pictures of George, Lily and himself to his friends he hadn't posted anything to prove her existence to social media. He didn't particularly want to post her face just yet, too conscious of the risks that it posted, but he supposed that her tiny fingers clutching the soft toy wouldn't cause too much of a problem. After he double checked the photo and uploaded it to his profile he leaned forwards, pressing a kiss to the back of her hand.

"What do you want to do today?" George asked, feeling his cheeks heat up just a little as Dream didn't immediately pull away from his position beside his legs. God, if he'd known his crush on Dream would have been *this* persistent he'd maybe have done something about it before a baby had been dropped into the mix, but the churning of his stomach every time they found themselves in the quiet moments couldn't be addressed as long as Lily was there. She needed their attention and care, there wasn't *time* for talking about things.

"I need to call my mom." Dream said. "My sister heard about Lily through Twitter and she's been pestering for a call for the last few weeks. I think she'll disown me if I don't tell her about this soon."

"Okay." George said, before standing up and moving to place Lily on her playmat. He gently lay her on her back and the moment she was surrounded by dangling shapes and bright colours she dropped the plushie Technoblade had sent, her eyes being distracted by everything before her as she reached up to play. While she was distracted, George sat back on the sofa beside Dream and put his feet up on the coffee table, closing his eyes and letting his head fall back. "I should probably explain to my mum why I've not gone back to England yet. I told her I'd be staying longer but I didn't mention Lily, I didn't know what to say."

"What do you mean?" Dream asked, leaning his head against George's shoulder and resting against his side while he watched Lily from where they sat.

George's eyes shot open at the gesture, though he was completely frozen and stared at the ceiling above him as he tried to process what was going on. The question he was going to ask made it one hell of a lot harder, too, and he swallowed nervously (knowing damn well that Dream would be able to feel the tension now in his shoulders).

"Well, what do I say? That I'm staying in America because my best friend has a baby and needs help?" He paused for a moment, before quickly forcing the words off his tongue. "That I became a dad while I was here?"

This was the first time he'd used that word. *Dad*. They'd never discussed what was going on between them, or what the arrangement was with Lily. Dream had signed the paperwork to adopt her, legally he *was* her father, but George was just there. Did Dream want to call him *Uncle George*? If that was all he wanted, why hadn't he started using it automatically? Sappnap and Bad had immediately been given the title of uncle, but George was still just *George*. Having unexplored romantic feelings for Dream made it difficult for him to tell what was going on between them, and he hoped if nothing else this would provide a bit of clarity.

"I suppose you are her other dad." He said, before quickly backtracking. "I-if you want that, I mean, your visa lets you stay for six months but you can leave whenever you feel like it. You've got no obligation to stay here and raise her, that's my job. But if you wanted, we could find a way for you to stay longer and you could be her dad, too."

The two of them fell silent, both trapped with their thoughts. Worries of undiscussed feelings being unrequited, that they'd overstepped boundaries that had been set silently and didn't *need* discussing because something like this just wasn't meant to happen. But the longer the silence went on, the worse the tension between them became, so George pulled out his phone and checked the time.

"Can we call my parents first? It'll be afternoon for them, I don't want to leave it too late to find out that they're *grandparents*."

Dream felt a weight lift off his chest at that and he smiled, sitting up properly and nodding.

"Sure, want me to wear something nicer?"

"You don't own anything nicer, I've been here a month, I *know* what clothes you own." George laughed. And the fact of the matter was, that was *true*. George did know what clothes he owned, his taste (or lack of), and it was something that felt extremely intimate. To know someone on that

level...

“I’ll grab Lily, you can tell them and we’ll show her off.” He said. As George called his parents on facetime, Dream stood up and crossed over to their little girl.

Their daughter .

“Hiya, Lil.” He whispered, one hand coming up to brush at her hair. “You’ve got two dads now, that’s pretty good going.” He grinned, watching as she recognised his smile and mimicked his expression back at him. It warmed his heart, and as he heard George beginning to speak to his parents he picked her up and cradled her close to his chest. He had absolutely no idea how any of their families were going to take it, he just hoped for Lily’s sake that they were understanding of the situation and supportive of their decision to take care of her together.

After a few minutes of talking, George looked to him and beckoned him over with his fingers. Dream sat down carefully and George moved closer so the two of them were in the frame in the corner of the screen, and Dream realised this was the first time he was actually meeting George’s parents.

It was gonna be one *hell* of a first impression.

“Good afternoon, George’s mum and dad.” Dream said with a smile, offering them a wave before George took control of the conversation again.

“So, I wanted to let you know why I’m still in America.” He said, taking in a deep breath as he tilted the camera down to show off Lily.

Sitting on Dream’s lap, with the plushie of Technoblade firmly grasped in her hands and mouth, she was oblivious to the phone being held, but her parents both heard the gasp that came from the device.

“This is Lily, say hi Lily.” He laughed, his tongue nervously darting out over his lips. “Her parents abandoned her, we found her, we went to the police and did everything we could and Dream adopted her. I’m staying to help. She’s not *legally* my daughter but... I mean, I think I’ve changed enough nappies at this point for it to count.”

George twisted the phone back towards himself as he looked at the screen and awaited his parents response. They weren't particularly old, and probably expected to have a little notice before becoming grandparents, but the smiles on their faces told him everything he needed to know.

Things would be okay .

The conversation became much easier then, with his parents wanting the camera to focus on Lily longer and Dream trying to get her to wave at them as they took screenshot after screenshot. They asked how old she was, how she was sleeping and eating, and they gave plenty of advice. And - to George's chagrin and Dream's delight - plenty of anecdotes of the kind of baby George had been. Fussy, never slept through the night, and they repeated on numerous occasions that the fact she wasn't going to have the same genetics as George and not cause him the same trouble he did to his parents was incredibly good luck.

Lily started to cry after a little while, wanting something to eat, and Dream said goodbye to George's parents quickly as he started rocking her and wandered through to the kitchen with her in his arms. Dream's feet could be heard walking away slowly and his voice fading away as he left the room, which then left George alone with his parents. They'd been happy before, but *now* he'd find out how they really felt.

"So, how are you and Dream finding time to... *Y'know* ?"

George blinked at his mother's question, furrowing his brows curiously. "What?"

"Well you weren't dating before you flew out there, at least you didn't tell us if you were, and I know what a new relationship is like. Being physical together is a hug--"

"MUM!" George yelled, his face turning bright pink. He didn't need the little square in the corner to show him just how red he'd gone, he could feel his blood rushing from every other part of his body to compensate. "We're not *together* , mum, we're just friends. He doesn't even like me that way. I just didn't want to leave him on his own with a baby, he doesn't know what he's doing." He said. It was an excuse, of course. Dream had proved himself to be a natural at being a father during the last official days of his vacation, and George had no doubt that if he'd gone home when he was meant to, Dream would've been just fine.

But George would've missed so much. He'd have missed Lily, he'd have missed Dream's smile and his laugh, and waking up at his side in the mornings. The way that he'd gone from begrudgingly accepting coffee when he'd been up all night to drinking three cups a day (albeit with a lot of sweetener poured in). He'd miss being close enough to see the freckles of his face, or the

thin strip of skin when he stretched his arms above him or--

Shit , maybe his mother had a point.

As he focused back on the call he realised his parents had been laughing, and he wondered just how obvious his little crush had been. Well, Dream hadn't said anything about it, and maybe there was a reason behind that. If it was so obvious, and Dream didn't want to bring it up, then he wouldn't either.

They were just friends, who happened to be raising a child together. It couldn't be the first time that had ever happened in the entire world, could it?

"Look, I should probably go help Dream look after Lily, and we've got to call his parents too. But I'll send you pictures as often as I can, and I'll try to call in a week just to chat if you want?"

"Oh, would you text us the address of your *friend's* house?" His father asked, winking at the word friend in a way that George forced himself to roll his eyes at as if he had any chance of denying how he felt to his parents. "We'll send a few gifts for her, we wouldn't be very good grandparents if we didn't spoil her rotten."

"Yes, that's fine, I'll text you in a bit. Love you." George said, waving his goodbyes before hanging up and groaning softly.

He wasn't going to let anything come between him and Dream just because of a joke his parents had made. He had kept his tongue held before, he could continue to do so.

Leaving his phone on the table he wandered through to the kitchen and saw Dream taking the bottle of formula out of the microwave with one hand, easily screwing on the top to the bottle and checking the temperature of the milk on the inside of his wrist before bringing it to Lily's mouth.

"How do you think that went?" Dream asked, looking away from their daughter as soon as he was sure she'd latched on safely. "They seemed happy."

"They were happy, they're going to send a few presents for her. I said we'd send plenty of pictures." He said, keeping a little more distance than he usually would as he tried to find something to distract himself with.

He walked to look at the corkboard, pretending to check the calendar that was now filled with doctor's appointments, different parent-child group schedules, a sheet to record when Lily was feeding and when she was sleeping just so they could keep track of any changes, and pictures of the three of them that had been printed off and stuck up. The ones on the corkboard were just printed on paper, upstairs there were still a few more prints that needed properly framing and hanging up in both her bedroom and theirs, and George smiled as he looked at the memories they'd already made together.

His life had changed so much in the last month, and for the better.

"What do you think your parents will say?"

"I think they'll love her." He said. "I think they'll be demanding to come drive here tomorrow and see her, too. No way am I going to be able to keep my mother away for long once she's actually *seen* that she's real, and this isn't all just a joke for clout."

"Definitely not a joke for clout." George smiled. "The clout is a pretty good bonus of her, though." He joked, and the two of them laughed just a little. Lily wasn't pleased with the fact that Dream was jostling her around as she drank, and one of her hands raised up and patted his chest with a small fist several times until he stopped.

"Someone's got you wrapped around her little finger. I guess she's in charge now."

"Yeah, I guess she is."

The two eased into a comfortable silence once more, George returning to the living room and pulling his phone from his pocket to find the tweet that Dream had posted earlier. It was on his second account, and the responses were utterly *priceless*. The comments were a combination of people freaking out that it *wasn't* a joke, people freaking out over the fact that she had a Technoblade plushie, or people talking about just how small her hand was. George retweeted it with a few pleading face emojis and scrolled through the rest of his feed for a few minutes, looking at some artwork and having a short back and forth with a few of his friends.

By the time Dream came back with a well fed Lily, he'd tucked his phone back into his pocket and closed his eyes. When he felt the sofa dipping under Dream's weight as he sat beside him, he didn't open his eyes. At least, not until he felt little hands pulling at his cheeks. Opening one to look at Lily over the bridge of his nose, he saw Dream holding her out towards him so that she

could reach his face and the grin that accompanied his actions.

“Partners in crime, I should’ve known.” He said cheerfully, leaning forwards to press a kiss to her forehead and make her giggle with his stubble again, before taking her from Dream as he pulled up his own phone to call his parents. This, he could tell, was going to go well.

Barely a second passed before the call was answered, and he wondered if his mother had been waiting for this exact moment, and as her face appeared on screen she almost seemed *disappointed* to see her son.

“Where is she? I really have a granddaughter?” Came the excited response, and Dream laughed as he turned the camera to face Lily and George. Instead of Lily sitting on George’s lap like she had done for the previous call, he had her in his arms and lifted high above his head. Dream couldn’t help but let his eyes linger on the view for a little while longer than he maybe should have. As George reached above his head, his shirt came away from his jeans just a little and he could glance at the very bottom of his stomach. George was lean - though he knew this from waking up in the middle of the night to limbs poking him in the side - but he’d never seen just how smooth and tight his skin looked. Pale, with a few dark strands of hair--

Oh *God* , he forced himself to look away as he felt himself heating up, glad that George’s attention was elsewhere and that his mother was too keen to watch Lily as she giggled and played with George to notice how he was reacting.

“We’ve had her for about three weeks now? She came to us mid-July, as soon as the police said her parents had been contacted I adopted her, and George is staying as long as he can to help out. We’ll see what kind of visa we can sort for him once this one runs out.”

“Oh, you could marry him!” His mother chimed in helpfully, and George almost dropped Lily at the suggestion. She didn’t mind, though, just laughing a little louder at the sensation - thinking it was all part of the game.

“Your mom sounds like Skeppy, Dream.” George said, sitting himself upright and holding Lily above his legs. Her little feet found his knees easily and she pushed down, testing out the strength of her legs as she jiggled and bounced herself around, gurgling and babbling as she played.

“She’s such a happy little thing, Dream. Are you sure she isn’t yours? She’s got your eyes, I can see it.”

“She’s not mine, mom. I mean, she is *mine* , legally, but biologically she’s not.” He laughed a little himself, holding his phone closer to Lily. This time, she reached out for the phone and when she saw the image before her move she squealed excitedly, bouncing her legs up and down once more.

“She likes you.” George said. “She knows her grandma when she sees her.”

Loud coos from Lily seemed to confirm what he’d said, and both the men laughed together. As Dream flipped the camera around to the front, he settled himself close to George and tried to ignore the way that their legs touched as the both squeezed into frame with Lily and continued the conversation. While his mother remained blissfully silent on the topic of *marrying* George for the rest of the call, Dream could recognise the look she was giving him.

Had he always been this damn see through?

Well, if he had, then George maybe hadn’t mentioned it for a reason. They’d had a week together of the vacation before Lily had shown up, and without the distraction of a child they’d had plenty of time to discuss their feelings. If George had been deliberately avoiding the topic, then Dream wasn’t going to say anything. Sure it might hurt, but he’d gotten over crushes before and he could do it again if it meant preserving their friendship and giving Lily a healthy and happy home to grow up in. Her having a good childhood was *much* more important than anything else in Dream’s life now, it had to be, he was her father. Putting anything above her was nothing less than terrible parenting, and he refused to do that for her.

His mother wanted to come to visit as soon as possible, just as Dream had expected, but he managed to convince her to arrange to visit a little later. He pointed out that the two of them would be competing in a tournament in two weeks time and, while they *could* technically pull out of the competition, it wouldn’t be fair to their teammates. Besides, it gave his mother an excuse to spend an afternoon doting on her - they could go to the park, to the beach, whatever she wanted - and George and Dream would be ready to take her back before bedtime.

With arrangements made and promises to send pictures made to his family, they said their goodbyes.

Neither Dream or George moved back from their close position after that, both utterly content with just sitting beside each other.

Time passed, and as George felt Lily becoming heavier in his arms as she fell asleep, he felt a head resting on his shoulder. He opened his mouth to make a joking comment about *like father, like daughter* , but Dream really was out cold. Deciding that he probably needed the rest, he took Lily

through to her bedroom and placed her in her crib to sleep for a few hours.

George spent the afternoon hanging up pictures of the three of them in their bedroom, two above Dream's bed and one above his desk. It all felt so homely, so domestic, and after he admired his handiwork he wandered back into the living room to check on Dream. It had been two hours and Lily would be waking up soon, so George decided it was *probably* time to wake Dream up too. As he approached him quietly he rested a hand on the younger man's shoulder, and he could've sworn Dream muttered something in his sleep.

"Dream?" George whispered gently, watching him carefully in case he was having some kind of nightmare. But the phrase was repeated, this time much clearer, and it had George retracting his hand quickly.

"Mm, I love you..."

He must've been dreaming about Lily, rather than recognising George's presence. Yes, that was it, he was thinking of his daughter and George was *selfish* to think those words could be directed at him.

Still, he carried them with him in his heart as he went about the rest of his day. And when Dream woke up another few hours later to the smells of food cooking and the sounds of George talking to Lily as he moved around the kitchen with her in the papoose, he smiled and stretched.

No matter if he felt romantically for George and the feelings *weren't* mutual. He still *had* George and Lily, and he would cherish every moment he shared with them.

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A tropical storm hit the coast the week after, and while the worst of the weather avoided Orlando the city was still lashed with heavy rains and strong winds that were plentiful in the outer rings of the storm. The three had spent a lot of time in the house together and while they had a garden to spend the sunnier days in, and plenty of things to do inside, they were all desperate to get out of the city.

When the sun shone again and the temperatures began to climb, the three had packed up Dream's car early in the morning and had started driving with one destination in mind.

The beach .

Lily hadn't been to the beach before, at least not with George and Dream, and the weather was absolutely perfect to introduce her to the wonders of the ocean. They'd meant to go during the second week of George's vacation but so much had happened that it had never come to fruition, and George was just as excited to see the beach for himself as he was about seeing Lily's reaction to the sights and sounds for the first time.

George had joined Lily in sleeping for most of the journey, leaving Dream to drive them there safely and quietly as he hummed quiet tunes under his breath. And if every song just so happened to be a lullaby (or the opening of the Lord of the Rings, which he seemed to have picked up perfectly from George) then no one needed to know that.

They arrived in late morning and the heat had well and truly kicked in, though a warm breeze coming in from the ocean at least meant the air wasn't still and uncomfortable. Dream reached over to shake George's shoulder lightly as they neared the parking lot, the two sitting in a comfortable silence as they searched for a spot to park. Despite setting off early the place was already heaving, but they eventually found a space and climbed out of the car, George grabbing their belongings from the trunk and Dream opening the door to the back seats and slowly waking up Lily.

Her little eyes fluttered open slowly, hands moving up to her face and a small yawn making her nose scrunch up adorably, and Dream couldn't help the grin that appeared.

"Good morning Lil." He said. "Have a good sleep? We're going to have a fun day today, you need the energy."

As he scooped her out of the seat and into his arms George closed the trunk of the car, moving round to grab the door behind Dream and look out to the beach before them. The white sands seemed to stretch on for miles, the ocean a beautiful blue that sparkled under the intense sun, and the pair started to walk to find somewhere to set up for the day. While Dream paid attention to the beach, George's focus was almost entirely on Lily. He pulled faces to make her giggle, the noises coming from her warming his heart more than he'd ever thought possible. It was, however, a little insulting when he stubbed his toe on a rock and Lily's laughter only intensified, but he found that her happiness made the pain fade away a lot quicker.

Eventually the trio had walked far enough along the beach to find a quiet spot to sit and George dropped their bags to the ground, laying out a blanket for the two of them and using their bags to weigh the corners down. Dream placed Lily on her stomach in the middle of it, sitting on one side and watching her try to push herself up with her arms as he started to sort through the things they'd brought with them.

“You want the sunscreen first?” Dream asked, pulling a bottle out of the bag and turning to offer it to George. The man leaned over and thanked him for it, sitting on the other side of Lily and squirting a little sunscreen onto his hands, rubbing it over her legs and arms before they got too comfortable to keep her from burning, before he focused on himself. Dream had turned his attention away from George for a moment, but he saw out of the corner of his eye as his hands moved down to his waist and he pulled his shirt over his head, and Dream *swore* his heart stopped.

They were at the beach, of *course* George was going to be taking his shirt off. Hell, *he* was going to take his own shirt off in a minute, but seeing his lean frame, his unblemished skin and the slight curve of his waist brought his mind to a complete halt. George was thankfully too busy rubbing sunscreen over his body to notice him staring, but he just couldn’t stop. Watching the way his hands rubbed over himself, seeing how his body moved as he twisted and turned from side to side... He couldn’t look away even though he knew he was going to be caught in a moment.

Lily was watching him too, out of curiosity to try and learn what he was doing, and as he turned away from her she let out a little squeal he looked back to her. He poked out his tongue and wiggled around, Lily using her strength to wiggle with him.

Fuck, Dream was utterly *gone*.

“Have you always caught the sun this fast?” George asked, and Dream’s mind came hurtling back into motion as he looked at George.

“Sorry, what did you say?”

“You’re red.” He explained, handing over the sunscreen to him. “Before you get any more burnt, try some of this.”

Dream took the bottle, realising his hands were shaking just a little as he squeezed it out into his palms and began lathering himself up. He knew it wasn’t sunburn, he barely ever burnt, but he didn’t want George to know he’d been staring at his body (and certainly didn’t want him to know the effect that had on him). George took a bottle of water from the cooler for himself and had a quick drink, before picking Lily up and standing her on the sand. Her face changed drastically, *very* curious about the new texture she was feeling, and instead of bouncing her knees up and down like she usually did she leaned forwards, arms reaching out and fingers trying to touch it.

“Careful, don’t let her put it in her mouth.” Dream warned, slipping his own shirt off as he watched

them.

“Can she do that yet?” George asked. “I haven’t seen her try.”

“Let’s not make sand be the thing she decides to give the first shot, then.” He said, leaning back onto the blanket once he was completely covered in sunscreen and putting his sunglasses on, letting himself just enjoy the heat of the sun on his body and the sound of his daughter and best friend playing together beside him. In a little while he’d take her down to the water to play and see how she liked the waves, but for now he’d become tired from the drive and was quite content with just resting.

When he closed his eyes, he swore it would only be for a minute, but when George looked around a few minutes later to see his mouth slightly open and his chest rising and falling slowly, he realised the man had fallen asleep.

“Is your daddy having a nap?” He asked Lily softly, before making mock snores. “Nap time for daddy Dream, I bet he’s dreaming about you. You’re his *favourite*. ” He told her. He leaned over and pressed a kiss against her cheeks, nose squishing against her face as he showered her with affection. George had never been an overly affectionate person, not particularly physical when it came to showing his friends how he felt, but with Lily everything came naturally. She was a child, *his child* , and he wanted her to know constantly how loved she was. It was so easy, and every toothless smile she gave him made his heart burst. It was worth it, and it would never stop being worth it.

As he placed Lily back on the blanket to let her occupy herself for a few minutes he looked back to Dream, admiring his body while he slept. His stomach was soft and completely smooth, and while that surprised George for some reason he realised he’d never actually *tried* to picture what Dream looked like shirtless. Why would he? But he did find that he liked it. His swimming trunks sat on his hips, just low enough to show off a little of his v line, and George felt himself blushing. Dream had taken his shirt off because they were at the beach and it was hot, not because he wanted to be eyed by George, so the older man blinked a few times and forced himself to look away.

The sun was high in the sky now and with the heat beating down on them, even the sea breeze was struggling to keep George cool. Deciding to let Dream sleep he stood up and took his flip flops off, picking Lily up with him and walking the short way down to the water’s edge. She seemed to be enjoying the new sights and sounds that being at the beach offered, and as they approached the shore her attention was focused completely on the waves that rolled towards them. The way they moved and the sound they made as they crashed against the gentle slope enthralled her, her brows furrowed together in a look that George had come to realise was the look she gave something she was trying to understand. Seeing her like that, so inquisitive and willing to learn, never failed to make him beam.

“You’re such a smart girl, shall we see what it feels like?” He asked. He took a step forward to let the water wash over his feet first, getting a sense of the temperature, before he adjusted his hold and lowered her to the ground. He held her just above the water, her feet dangling, and as a wave rolled towards them it tickled the tips of her toes and she let out a squeak. Her legs kicked and splashed, and George let out a laugh and lowered her to the ground completely. With her feet now touching the wet sand she began trying to bounce herself up and down, giggling and whooping when another wave rolled towards her and covered her feet and ankles in water. She was incredibly animated, her eyes bright and excited as she enjoyed the new sensations.

After a few minutes, George found the position uncomfortable, so he sat himself down and held her at his side. Lily quickly discovered that if she *kicked* the waves rather than just bounced, she could make a bigger splash, and before long George was absolutely covered in salt water and Lily was having the time of her life. She laughed plenty, she was such a happy child, but even in the last month this was the happiest he’d seen his daughter.

George looked out to the sea and started pointing at boats and birds, narrating a tale of a fisherman adventuring far out to sea and finding an island full of mysterious creatures, when he heard a familiar voice behind him.

“What happens to the fisherman?”

Dream sat himself beside George, looking at him with a smile on his face that screamed domesticity and George found himself stumbling over his words.

“He’s happy.” George replied. “He never wanted to leave his home, he thought going out to sea would be scary, but on the island he finds another person, someone he never thought he’d find, and he realises that his home is with them. He tells them that he loves them.”

“Yeah?” Dream asked, looking out to the horizon and smiling as he felt a wave tumble over his feet and run up the beach behind him. “Happily ever after?”

“Yeah.” George said, swallowing as he looked at Dream. “Happily ever after.”

Silence hung between them, the waves distant in both of their ears, and as Dream looked back to George there was a moment in which neither of them spoke but they both wanted to. Confessions sat on the tips of their tongue, ready to fall at a moments notice: it was a case of who would cave first.

“Dream--”

“George--”

They both laughed, Dream bringing a hand to his head and running his fingers through his hair. Slicked back, it somehow made him look even *more* attractive, and as Dream gestured for him to continue George knew it was now or never.

“I just wanted to say--”

Lily began to cry. The conversation was dropped immediately as George lifted her out of the water and into his lap, positioning her so she could see both of them as he tried to figure out what had upset her.

“Sweetie, what’s wrong?” He whispered, one hand rubbing her shoulder softly. The cry had come on suddenly and out of nowhere, which told him that it wasn’t hunger (although getting lunch soon would be a good idea) and his brows furrowed as Dream reached out for her foot.

“She’s just got a little cut, must’ve been a crab or a sharp shell that got brought up by the waves.” He said, his thumb running softly over the wound. It was tiny and barely bleeding, though she was very upset at the touch, and George got to his feet to start rocking her.

“You’re alright, hey, it’s okay. Shall we go sit back down? Have a cuddle and then we’ll have some lunch, that’ll make things better.” He said softly, feeling Lily’s head resting beneath his chin and her fingers pinching the skin on his shoulder taughly. Dream got up with him, walking at his side as they returned to their belongings. As George sat and cuddled the weeping child, glad when her cries started to even out, he pulled out the papoose and slipped back into his shirt.

“I’ll go grab some sandwiches for us if you want a break, I’ve already had a nap.” He said. “I’ll take Lily with me and see if I can get them to heat up her bottle, I’m not sure it’ll take much in this weather though.”

Dream seemed a little on edge as he spoke, a forced laugh accompanying his words, and as he slipped the sling over his body George couldn’t help but wonder what could have happened if their conversation hadn’t been interrupted. He’d told himself that he wasn’t going to tell Dream and he almost did, but what would that have done? If he was on edge now, surely telling him would’ve

been a worse option. He needed to get a hold of himself, needed to stop picturing his stomach every time he closed his eyes, and needed to remember that at the end of the day they were friends. Best friends, but *just* friends.

Once Lily had stopped crying, Dream took her and fastened her against his chest, grabbing his wallet and her bottle and giving George a wave before he headed off towards the pier. It would be a long walk, but it would give himself some space to think. Some time away from George - beautiful, *shirtless* George.

“Oh Lil...” He sighed, looking down at her as she turned her head from side to side to watch the seagulls flying overhead. “What the hell am I supposed to do?”

#

The pier was much busier than their little spot on the beach, but it didn't take too long to find someplace to buy sandwiches. While he waited for his order to be prepared Lily's bottle was warmed for him and he stood to the side feeding her, though she was distracted by the carnival rides, the music, and the lights around them. He couldn't help but follow her gaze towards the ferris wheel and smiled as he looked at it.

“You wanna go up there?” He asked her, feeling one of her hands brush against his fingers as she reached to hold on to her bottle. “Tell you what, before we go home you can go up with your dad. You're not gonna get me on there.” Dream laughed, hearing his name called out and a plastic bag with two sandwiches in handed across the counter. He thanked the woman for his food and began to make the long return walk back. His toes enjoyed the feeling of the warm sand beneath them, and he focused on it more when Lily finished drinking and fell asleep in his arms. Just enjoying the beach like he hadn't for some time, it was enough to calm his mind down. The sounds of the waves and the gulls, the breeze on his skin, the tiny baby asleep on his chest... Things were *good*. He was turning 21 in a matter of days, his best friend was living with him for the foreseeable future, he couldn't think of a better world to be living in.

When he arrived back at the blanket George was sleeping, so he placed the sandwiches and Lily down side by side before taking the papoose and his shirt off. He took both his and George's shirts, using them as a pillow for her head while he ate his own hurriedly. One thing he'd discovered now that he was a father was just how quickly he could eat, and he never failed to impress himself as he seemed to inhale the sandwich and brush his hands off before picking Lily back up and holding her in a more comfortable position as she slept. He used one arm to support her head and neck, the other leaning over to grab more sunscreen and rub it over her. While she wasn't as pale as George, her skin tone was still lighter than his own and the last thing he wanted was for her to burn. He managed to cover her in another layer as she snoozed, and as he finished with the bottle he decided that George had been asleep long enough.

He gently threw the bottle so it landed on his stomach, not wanting to hurt him, and George grumbled the moment he felt the impact.

“Wakey wakey.” Dream said softly. “Lunch is served, cuban sandwiches, Lil’s sleeping.”

“Thanks.” George said, his hands moving to rub at his eyes as he sat up slowly and stretched, yawning and reaching for the food he’d been brought. “It’s nice here, the beach. We should come more often. Lily loves it.”

“She does, it’ll be nice in winter too. Still fairly warm, much quieter, the water’ll be cooler though.”

“You’ve never been in the sea in England in winter.” George said, manners completely forgotten as he spoke with his mouthful. “I thought it’d be uncomfortably hot but it’s been nice being out in the sun all day. I might tan.”

“You’ll probably burn.” Dream laughed, Lily stirring in his arms for a moment as he moved, before stilling again. “She’s been out for about thirty minutes, if you want to head out and enjoy the ocean I can sit here with her. I’ve been here a million times, you should enjoy your first visit.”

“Why wouldn’t I enjoy being here with you and Lily?” He asked, his tone dangerously close to restarting the conversation from before.

No, both of them had consciously decided to avoid the topic.

“Dunno, just thought you might want to enjoy being a young person.”

“You’re *literally* younger than me, shut up.” George rolled his eyes, scrunching up a napkin and throwing it at Dream gently. The two settled into a comfortable silence again, Dream snapping a few pictures on his phone and sending a couple to his parents. He swiped through his gallery and picked one he’d taken earlier - of George and Lily at the water’s edge in the distance and her feet dangling down into the water between his - and set it as his home screen. With that done, and George wandering back down to the sea to enjoy himself, Dream settled in for the afternoon. He settled back on the blanket and placed Lily on his stomach, his hands resting on her back as she slept against him.

It was perfect.

Time passed too quickly, and by the time George came back from the water it was almost 4pm and Lily had been playing in the sand with Dream for the last hour. She loved it, loved picking it up, throwing it, putting her toes in it, and wriggling in it. He swore she must've been a worm in a past life with how much she seemed to enjoy wriggling around, and the thought kept him smiling as he put her back in the sling as they walked back to the car. While loading the trunk, Dream looked over to the pier and saw that the crowds had somewhat thinned out - likely starting to head back home, or into the city to find somewhere to eat dinner - and he remembered the promise he'd made to Lily earlier.

"Do you want to go on the ferris wheel?" Dream asked. "I'm not a fan of heights, but Lily was looking at it earlier. If the two of you want to go on I can bring the car up to the pier."

"What do you say, Lily?" George asked, moving to stand at Dream's shoulder and look at her. "Shall we go on the ferris wheel? Prove that we're braver than your daddy, he's such a scaredy cat."

"I'm *not* scared." Dream scoffed, closing the trunk of the car and taking Lily out of the sling to hand to George. "I'm just going to pull the car round. Go on, you'll love it."

George couldn't deny that, he knew he'd enjoy the view and the time with Lily, and so he took her from Dream and held her wrist to help her wave goodbye to him, before starting his usual rambling conversations he had to engage her as he walked away. It was Dream's favourite things about George, just how focused he was on talking to Lily and talking to her as much as he could. He was *so* glad that he'd decided to stay and help look after her, he couldn't imagine a better person to be her dad.

Dream clambered into the car and pulled out of the parking lot, following a complicated string of *one way* roads to drive onto the pier itself and into its smaller lot. Parking was pricey, so he got a ticket for the shortest length of time and hoped there hadn't been a queue before George and Lily had gotten on the ride before he walked to find them.

Waiting at the foot of the ferris wheel, Dream straight his neck to look directly up - his hand shielding his eyes from the sun. He could see George and Lily near the top, George holding her with one arm and pointing out different things around them. While he couldn't hear the conversation they were having, he could smile at the interaction and Dream felt himself sigh as the light caught George's face just perfectly.

His stomach churned at the sight, and so he waved to catch their attention. As the car with George and Lily came closer to the ground, George pointed at Dream and waved and he heard Lily squeal even from that distance. Knowing that she recognised him filled his heart enough to forget the thoughts of George that filled his head, and as they came off the ride he saw her reaching for him. Dream laughed, giving her a kiss on the cheek and taking her in his arms. What could make this day any better?

“Take her back to the car, I saw an ice cream place and thought I’d get us some.”

Ice cream, *that* could make the day better.

Dream pointed roughly to where he’d parked and made his way back with Lily in his arms, strapping her into her car seat and tucking her under her blankets.

“Get some sleep on the way home, alright?” He said gently. “You can have some milk when you wake up, you’ve had such a long day.”

With another last kiss to her forehead Dream walked around the car and sat in the driver’s seat, rolling down the windows on both sides and waiting for George to return. He watched Lily in the rearview mirror, seeing her eyes closing and her head lolling towards the Techno plushie (which had quickly become her favourite toy - it would calm her down instantly no matter what was making her upset). When George returned with two cones they both sat quietly and enjoyed the sweet treat, Dream finishing his first and setting off for the long drive home. They played music quietly, talking about their favourite parts of the day and their plans for Dream’s upcoming birthday, avoiding returning to the conversation from before.

Both sensing that it would be best to move on, the end of the journey was almost exclusively Disney karaoke and they pulled into Dream’s driveway laughing together. Lily had woken up a few minutes before home, looking around a little dazed from her nap, before bursting into tears as soon as the car stopped.

“She’s probably hungry, and might need changing.” Dream said. “If you grab her I’ll put some milk in the microwave, I’ll get the stuff out of the trunk in a minute.”

The two worked together well to calm her down, George bringing her inside and changing her diaper quickly before meeting Dream in the kitchen and taking a bottle of milk from him as he went to empty the car. By the time dinner was in the oven Lily was much happier, lying on her

back and playing with her blanket happily. Dream setting beside George on the sofa, an arm casually thrown behind him as he turned on the tv and flicked through the channels to find something they could watch while they ate. After eventually settling with putting on *Bojack Horseman* for the umpteenth time they tuned out, scrolling through their phones on Twitter and having a back and forth that their fans seemed to enjoy. When the timer for the oven went off, George grabbed their food and plated it up, Dream keeping an eye on Lily while she played.

Their evening followed the same comfortable routine, with Dream putting Lily to bed that night. Her room was completely furnished now, the boxes moved out of the way and leaving what both of them could only describe as a well decorated space. The walls were painted pastel yellow and had a series of animal decals near the floor on one side - a tree decal rising from floor to the ceiling and creating a little nook with a beanbag, fairy lights, and soft rug. Her room had two chests filled with toys, a shelf that was packed full of books and pictures of the three of them hanging on the walls. Dream went through the wardrobe filled with little clothes for Lily and pulled out a pair of panda pyjamas they'd bought in Sapnap's honour, bundling Lily up and picking out a book to read to her as she fell asleep. When he turned the light out and turned the baby monitor on he went to the bathroom, washing his face and brushing his teeth before changing into his own pyjamas and wandering to get a glass of water from the kitchen. He looked into the living room and saw that the light was still on, though when he went to turn it off he saw that George was asleep on the sofa.

"Hey, George?" He whispered, pressing a hand on his shoulder and shaking him lightly. "C'mon, let's go to bed."

George didn't stir, and while he knew that he'd get a sore neck sleeping like that he *did* look peaceful, so Dream threw a blanket over him and turned the light out, leaving him to sleep knowing that he'd eventually wake up and make his way to bed. He grabbed his glass of water, returned to his room, and passed out quickly.

###

George sleeping on the sofa became commonplace that week, and Dream wasn't a fan of it. He didn't mention it, it wasn't his place to ask George to sleep in his bed with him if he wasn't comfortable there for any reason, and the dynamic between them during the day didn't change at all. They still joked with each other (Dream mentioning just how terrible his beard looked every morning, not letting him see that he thought he looked *very* handsome), still made videos together, and still followed their routine with Lily.

When Dream's birthday came around they had a small get-together with his family, his parents and siblings in love with Lily and welcoming George to the family, and they spent an evening with pizza, cake, and alcohol. Dream wasn't the biggest fan of drinking, he didn't see the point in making a huge fuss over it and had no intentions on getting blackout drunk like some people might have done on their 21st birthday. He found that taking care of Lily was a convenient excuse not to

drink, and instead he enjoyed being able to remember the night. His parents playing with Lily, George and his siblings getting along brilliantly, Patches curling up on his lap and demanding affection - it all felt a little bit surreal.

He'd cried when he went to bed that night. He'd never imagined even just a few months ago that his birthday would've been like this - so full of love and laughter, with everyone he held near and dear to him wishing him well. Bad and Sapnap had called in the morning, George, Dream and Lily sitting together on their end as they'd whiled the hours away, and he still hadn't gotten over their reactions to seeing Lily, to saying how well the two of them suited parenthood (and, in Sapnap's case, how well they suited each other).

The Pink Parrots winning MCC the following weekend was the cherry on top of the cake. George had to buy takeout for them as a forfeit, but he didn't mind. Seeing Dream happy made *him* happy, even if his stomach twisted and churned as he watched him smile and laugh and tried not to think about the emotions it stirred up inside.

Falling in love with Dream had been an accident, a terrible accident, and he didn't know how to come back from it.

Normally he'd wait it out, until an answer came from the heavens and he could get out of the situation without thinking. This time, however, the Universe wasn't so kind.

"We should get married."

It was the end of August when George choked on his coffee, the shock of Dream's words (and the nothingness they seemed to have come from) left him speechless. Dream, on the other hand, had managed to deliver the line without so much as blinking differently, not even looking up from Twitter as he picked at his breakfast.

"What--"

"Well, we talked about it before right? It's an easy way to get a visa. Plus you could legally adopt Lily too, I mean, we don't have to but--"

"Okay."

“Okay?”

“Yeah, okay.” George said, his heart settling heavily in his stomach. “We can get married.”

Dream continued with his breakfast utterly unphased, but George couldn’t look away from his coffee. To avoid having to talk about it any further he walked into the living room and looked at Lily. She’d learned how to roll onto her stomach a week ago, and was currently trying to master rolling onto her back. George knew when that happened she’d be on the move quickly, she *hated* being able to see things but not reach them and once she had a form of motion that could get her from one side of the room to another, there’d be trouble. They’d spent the last week baby proofing every cupboard and sharp edge they could find in the home, but both knew that once she could move she’d find the one corner of a table they’d missed.

For now, George just smiled as he watched her squirming around and babbling to herself. It made it easier to forget about what he’d just agreed to, though he knew those words would echo in his mind for hours to come.

He was going to marry Dream.

Shit.

Chapter End Notes

time for the pining to get serious, lads

Month Three: September (Part One)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

September began under the cover of clouds, with something rumbling in the distance. Dream couldn't be certain if it was the hurricane barreling down on the city or if it was the ache in his chest whenever he looked at George. The storm in question was a category three hurricane - just enough to concern Dream (and more than enough to concern George) but the pair had remained in their home. The forecast had the storm weakening substantially to a category one hurricane before hitting the city and they were far enough inland not to worry about storm surges. Despite it all, George was still concerned, and Dream let him do what he needed to in order to feel safe. It turned out that it was a lot of pacing, a lot of packing emergency bags and going to the store for batteries and emergency chargers, and Dream was sitting on his phone with Lily fast asleep on his chest. His hand rested on her back, fingers twiddling with a few longer locks of her hair while he tapped his way onto discord and scrolled through his friend list to see who was online.

Bingo.

Dream: Hey, Skeppy, I need your opinion on something.

Skeppy: Does it involve the police?

Dream: *Why would it involve the police?*

Skeppy: That's not a no Dream

Dream: It does not involve the police

Skeppy: Okay, so what's up???

Dream: If George and I were engaged, who would have proposed?

Skeppy: Is this a trick question lol??? U obviously, are u proposing??

Dream: Long story, thanks for your help!

Skeppy: WOAHH WOAHH WAIT YOU ALREADY TO LET ME NOW!!!

Dream chuckled, locking his phone and placing it down on the coffee table beside him and moving his attention to Lily completely. She was always so peaceful when she slept, Technoblade's plush in one hand and his shirt crumpled up into her other fist. He pressed a soft kiss to her forehead, watching her nose wrinkle in response.

He thought about getting up to put her in her cot for a while and do something - maybe he could edit before the storm kicked in and they risked losing power, or he could start actually thinking about how he was going to get married to George, but he didn't. He just lay there and watched his daughter snooze, until she inevitably woke up. Her grip on her toy loosened and she dropped the plush to the side as she reached upwards towards Dream's face, her fingers pinching together.

"You want to come up here?" He asked, sitting himself upright and lifting her higher against his chest to cuddle her closer. As he gave Lily a little squeeze she stretched one arm out over his shoulder and tried to reach for his hair, trying to tug on a few loose strands that had fallen out of the loose bun he'd tied. At some point he needed to get his hair cut, but over the last few months it had been completely forgotten.

"No tugging, Lil." Dream said, bringing one hand up to meet hers and gently move it away from his hair. "We don't hurt people, okay?"

A series of coos from the little girl was taken by Dream to mean understanding of his words, and he stood up with her still pressed against him. She turned her head curiously from left to right as they moved through the house, Dream walking into the kitchen and grabbing the papoose on his way past so he could keep her close while he worked. He could make dinner from scratch, and maybe during that time he could think about how the hell he was going to broach the topic of the ever more complicated relationship he seemed to have with George, *to* George.

He blended flour, eggs and a little salt together and removed the mixture from the bowl, kneading it with his hands and making funny noises to keep Lily giggling as time passed. At the moment he decided to push down on the dough and make the same sound as an elephant he heard the front door clicking open and footsteps coming up the corridor.

"Have we got a circus in the kitchen?" George called, the door closing behind him as he stepped

out of his shoes and slid across the laminate flooring in his socks, Lily watching him slide into view with a delighted laugh and Dream smiling widely as he looked over his own shoulder.

“We have now that the clown has arrived.” Dream replied. “You wanna go play with your dad?” He said, his voice a little softer as he spoke to Lily and her head turned to look at where the voice had come from. Dream just looked over to George, nodding down to their daughter. “Mind grabbing her? She won’t like being covered in dough.”

George would’ve come up with some kind of clever quip, but instead he just moved closer and adjusted the straps of the sling carefully. He couldn’t stop himself from glancing at the hairs on Dream’s arms, his sleeves rolled up to his elbows in a way he shouldn’t find as attractive as he did, and he took his time to enjoy his proximity to the man before he pulled Lily and the sling away from his body. When Dream was free he went back to kneading and George pulled their daughter out of the sling, taking her through to her playmat in the living room and making sure she was comfortable before standing himself in the doorframe. He could see Lily from there and talk to Dream with ease, it was a win-win.

“What’re you making?”

“Pasta, I thought it’d be nice to try and have something homemade for once.”

“Pasta’s always good, do you want a hand with it?”

“I got it, just keep an eye on Lil. Dinner is on me, okay?”

“We’re already getting married, you don’t have to woo me Dream.” George said, forcing a chuckle from his chest and trying to ignore the pain he felt. At least Dream couldn’t see how crestfallen he looked from his own words, and with the conversation somewhat over he moved back beside Lily, sitting on the plush carpet and bringing a finger to tickle her toes. She giggled, kicking her legs in response, and George smiled. No matter how much it hurt that his feelings for Dream would remain hidden, her joy made it so much easier to get through it.

He heard running water, then Dream’s footsteps walking towards him before they stopped and he sat next to George. He was *very* aware of the way their knees pressed against each other, despite having the entire room to sit in, and he swallowed back any emotions he tried to attribute the gesture to. Surely, he just wanted to be next to his daughter, and who was George to stop that from happening?

“The storm’s supposed to hit tonight.”

“We’ll be fine.” Dream assured him, turning his head to look at George with a smile. “Promise. I’ve lived in Florida my whole life, there’s been worse storms and I’m still here, my house is still here, my parents are still around.”

George was still on edge, even if he wasn’t voicing those concerns Dream could see it in the way he held himself, so he reached out with a hand and pressed it to his shoulder, thumb running over the fabric of his shirt to try and give him a little more comfort.

“When Lily’s in bed we can have a romantic dinner, as your fiance it’s only right I do what I can to take your mind off things.”

That made George laugh, in a way that had him leaning back and almost losing his balance as his eyes squeezed shut tightly and a snort left his mouth, and Dream beamed with pride. Making George sound so happy, making him laugh without a care in the world despite his worries, it made him feel so *good*. And George didn’t have to know that, he was just a friend trying to keep another friend calm, right?

“You’re the worst fiance I could’ve ever asked for.”

“You *wound* me.” Dream joked, jabbing a finger into George’s side and watching him squirm in response. George’s laugh softened just a little and he raised his eyebrows, a hand moving to protect his side.

“Don’t start something you can’t finish, Dream.”

“I think I’m *very* capable of finishing this, George.”

He smiled wickedly, not about to back down, and when George didn’t take back his challenge he leaned over to get a better vantage point. Dream’s fingers went straight for his sides, then up to his armpits and under his chin, and George was defenseless. He couldn’t wriggle free of Dream’s grasp enough to overcome him and tickle him back, ending up on the floor with Dream’s body pinning him down. While George kept laughing he was painfully aware of his thoughts moving away from how *funny* the situation was, and moving towards how much he enjoyed being completely at Dream’s mercy, how he enjoyed the breathless smile on his face caused by *him* and the closeness of their bodies. His shirt had untucked from his jeans from the quick movements and

his stomach was on display, and George felt something stirring within him.

His thought process wasn't the most intelligent or logical at that point, but in his defense any blood that *could* have been used to make a sensible decision was being redirected elsewhere and so he very deliberately jerked his head to the side as Dream's fingers moved to his exposed stomach, smacking his head on the table leg beside him as inconspicuously as he could.

"Ow, *fuck* ." George whispered under his breath, the pain genuine as he closed his eyes and Dream immediately pulled back from him, giving him space to move away from the table as he began to panic.

"George! Shit, are you alright?" The words spilled from his lips quickly, guilt filling his body while George sat himself upright and rubbed the side of his head. Of *course* he'd managed to tackle George to the ground next to the one object that wasn't baby-proofed already, and he was quick to get to his feet. "Let me get you some ice, don't try and stand up."

"It's fine." George said, letting out a shaky breath and forcing himself to open his eyes. He blinked a couple of times but his vision was fine, he didn't feel sick, and while his head *hurt* it wasn't bleeding. At least his attempt of removing himself from the situation hadn't resulted in a concussion, he wasn't entirely sure how he'd have gone about explaining that in a hospital. *'Well, my fiance started tickling me and I started having certain feelings, which would be fine if we were engaged because we were in love but it's because I'm helping him look after his adoptive daughter and it's a useful way to get a Visa so I can stay because he's my best friend and I want to help. But I am in love with him, just pretending not to be, while pretending I am.'*

Dream returned a few minutes later with tea towels wrapped around an ice pack and a glass of water, and a packet of painkillers stuffed into his pocket, and he looked at George remorsefully.

"I'm so sorry." He said, moving in front of him and placing the water and painkillers on the table before taking the ice and gesturing to his head. "Where will it help the most?"

"I've got it." George said, taking it from him and bringing it slowly to his head. He winced a little at the initial shock of the cold, but it *was* helping a fair amount and with his other hand he moved to take the painkillers.

"Stay there for a little bit, if you're just hurting you can have a nap, I think it's safe. And I'm here too, so if anything happens I can wake you up or call a doctor or something."

“Dream, really, I’m *fine* .”

As convincing as George’s tone sounded, Dream shouldn’t shake the guilt away from his stomach. George didn’t seem to be particularly thrilled that he was being coddled so he kept a little distance between them, allowing him to call the shots and turning his own focus to Lily who remained blissfully ignorant of the situation around her, instead trying once more to roll onto her stomach. Dream sat back and watched, keeping a close eye on both George and Lily. They were his family now, he wanted to keep them *safe* , sometimes he just didn’t think he did a very good job of it.

#

George took Lily to bed that night, sitting in her bedroom with the lights down low, rocking back and forth in a rocking chair they’d found online while he hummed quietly to try and lull her to sleep. Her legs had stopped moving a little while ago, her fingers now softly pinching at her own ears as her eyes sagged closed. It wouldn’t be long before she was out of it completely and George could head back downstairs to have dinner with Dream. Their jokingly romantic meal seemed to have become a much bigger deal than when first suggested, Dream insisting on making George feel safe in the storm and wanting to make up for earlier. No matter how much George told him everything was okay, that it was an accident, Dream couldn’t shift the guilt. George almost felt *more* guilty for that, knowing that the action was deliberate on his part: but then they’d just go back and forth trying to feel more guilty than the other and so he’d given in. Fresh pasta sounded nice, anyway.

When George was certain that Lily was asleep he stood up slowly, avoiding the floorboards that he knew creaked, and shifted her in his arms to tuck her into her cot. He marvelled at just how much she seemed to be growing every day - he could still remember how tiny she’d seemed among all her blankets and toys on the first night they’d left her there. Time really did *fly* as she grew.

He turned off the lights in her room entirely and George closed the door behind him, following the smell of tomatoes and peppers downstairs and wandering into the kitchen. He couldn’t help but laugh softly at the sight.

“Candles, really?”

“In case the power goes out.” Dream explained, and while candles really were the icing on the cake of a romantic evening George could see the logic in that. There was *still* a hurricane outside. It had lost a lot of strength, but was still a category two storm and George was still worried. Dream looked over his shoulder to George, catching him in the act of looking afraid, and offered him a smile.

“Grab the plates?” He asked, trying to take his mind off things, and George nodded happily. He moved around the kitchen as if it was his own, pulling two large plates out of the cupboard and grabbing two glasses for them while Dream began to drain the pasta. He poured two glasses of coke, set them on the table and sipped at his own while Dream mixed the sauce and pasta together. It wasn’t quite Michelin star worthy service, but Dream gave him a wide smile when he presented the plates of food and that was perfectly fine for George.

“You know I’m still sorry about earlier, right?” Dream asked, sitting himself opposite and taking in a deep breath. They needed to have this conversation sooner rather than later, and he steeled himself against any backlash there might be. “We need to figure out the whole wedding thing, too.”

George had choked on his coffee when Dream had first suggested getting married, and now he was about to do the same on his pasta. It wasn’t as if he’d forgotten about it, but it hadn’t been talked about seriously in almost a week so he’d presumed that Dream had changed his mind. Maybe he didn’t *want* to marry him anymore, and goodness knew that was completely fine, maybe this was all a joke that had gone too far, and for too long, and--

“Hey, you still listening?”

“What?”

“Thought not.” Dream laughed to himself, a smile on his face. “If you’re still comfortable with going through with it all then we need to make it seem convincing. You’ll need a ring, we should tell our families and our friends, maybe worth saying something on Twitter too. And when we’re out of the house we should, y’know, be a couple.”

George reached for his drink, taking a large gulp and forcing it down his throat before he tried to will himself to say something in response. He could say no, back out of it now, but then he wouldn’t be able to stay and look after Lily. He couldn’t be her dad, and the last few months had been so *important* to him that he couldn’t imagine losing that, no matter the cost. Even if the cost happened to be his own sanity while he pretended this didn’t mean anything to him. Dream was talking about it so easily, to him this must be *nothing*.

“Why do I get the ring?”

Dream chuckled, spiralling the pasta in front of him around his fork.

“We *both* know I’d propose. I *did* suggest the idea of getting married, and Skeppy said that if we--”

“Skeppy? What do you mean Skeppy said?”

“I texted him, I didn’t say anything I just asked *hypothetically* who would propose if we were engaged.”

“And he said you?” George said, catching that his tone sounded just a little more *whiny* than it maybe should have. He wasn’t supposed to be letting on to Dream that he really felt things about this arrangement, it was a convenience, the dreams he’d had of proposing needed to stay firmly tucked away in his head. None of that would ever have happened, anyway. “Fine, I suppose. We can get a ring. Do Twitter really need to know?”

“Not if you don’t want them to.” Dream said. “I just know that when they go through your application to stay they’ll probably have some kind of social media check. If there isn’t anything online about it they might get a bit suspicious.”

“We’ve not said anything before.” George pointed out, and then his mind remembered the hundreds of occasions they’d flirted playfully, both in streams and videos and on Twitter, and the countless compilations pulled together from that. There were fanfics about them, fanarts, *plenty* of evidence to back up the idea that they had a relationship that they weren’t ready to share with their fans but that did exist... Maybe it could work. “Okay. How long do we wait?”

“Dunno, couple of months? We’ve already got a baby, they’d probably understand if it was a short engagement.”

“November, maybe?” George suggested, looking back down to the plate of food in front of him. As he lifted his arm to stab the pasta he realised just how heavy his body felt under the sheer weight of pretending, but he forced himself to work through it. The pasta was good, and he was starving, and that made it a whole lot easier to keep going.

“November sounds good, maybe a week or so after your birthday? That way everyone’s already here.”

“What, you’re inviting all our friends and family over for my birthday?” George asked, laughing a little as he twirled his fork and watching as Dream looked up at him. His face was serious, that *hadn’t* been a joke. “You know you don’t have to do anything like that, it’s not like 24’s a special

birthday or anything, we can just stay at home and have cake.”

“What if I want to throw you a big party?” Dream asked. George almost thought he looked upset at not having the opportunity to make a show of things, but before he could get a good look at Dream’s face the world around them was plunged into darkness and a gust of wind whistled outside. George was suddenly less focused on Dream’s expression and more on the changing weather around them, swallowing and letting go of his fork to cling to his chair instead.

“Relax, it’s fine.” Dream said. “The power comes from ages away, somewhere closer to the storm’s probably having issues, we’re safe here. We’ve still got candles, we’ve got our phones, it’ll be a day or two before things get sorted.”

“You sure?”

“When have I *ever* been wrong, George?” Dream asked, following it up quickly. “Don’t *actually* answer that, seriously, don’t do it. Do you wanna be in the picture?”

“Picture?” George asked, watching Dream’s face light up as he reached into his pocket and turned his phone on. While Dream positioned the camera towards the table George shifted out of the way, assuming that if the candlelight wasn’t on him anymore that he wouldn’t be picked up by the camera. He watched Dream chuckle to himself, typing away quickly before turning his phone off again. George felt a vibration in his pocket and looked to Dream, who was giggling and looking *far* too pleased with himself.

“What’ve you done?”

“Just posted something on Twitter.” He smirked. Moving back towards the table, George cautiously opened up his own phone and clicked onto the app. As soon as he saw the image and the caption he groaned, and Dream’s laugh became much louder at that.

@dreamwastaken2: Romantic candlelit dinner for two - shame about the hurricane :(
@georgenootfound is hiding under the table

“Have I ever mentioned I hate you?” George asked, and Dream only laughed harder at that.

“Save it for when we’re married.” He wheezed, bringing a hand to wipe away a mock tear from his

eyes. Despite the storm outside, things felt a little bit more *normal* between them now. They'd managed, at least, to get through that conversation and things were figured out just a bit more. Sure, there were still a few details to iron out, but the hard part was done.

They *were* getting married.

#

All things told, the storm hadn't been that bad. They'd played on their switches together and headed to bed when the wind started to die down a bit. Things weren't too difficult, though without power they had to use an old camping stove to heat up Lily's formula to keep her fed, but the two of them managed. Their power was back and working normally a couple of days later and George was feeling much better about living in an area prone to hurricanes - there'd be no damage to the neighbourhood they lived in, or to Dream's parent's home.

"Dream?" George wandered down the stairs, scrolling through a web page on his phone and looking at the other man. He was sat with a notebook in front of him, scribbling down ideas, and George gestured towards it curiously.

"Ideas for the wedding." Dream said. "I know it's all fake but, we do need to plan it."

"Right, but before that." George said, sitting himself beside Dream and taking in a deep breath. He was perched on the edge of the sofa, uncertain in himself as he continued. "If we need to be a couple, we need to do couply things... And holding hands is easy but people will expect us to-"

"To kiss? Yeah, I know." Dream said. It took him a moment to register George's expression, his nerves, and he shifted to face him. Placing his pen down and giving George his full attention he continued. "Have you ever-"

"No." George replied quickly, and his cheeks went a little red at the answer he gave. "I want to make sure I know how. If we're getting married, people will have expected us to have kissed before."

"Yeah, you're right." Dream said, shifting and running his hand over his stubble. God, he needed to shave, but he took one look at George's beard and reminded himself that *George* needed to shave even more than he did. Though honestly, he wouldn't mind if the beard stayed. "I mean, you can get Tinder, no one says you can't get married and cheat on someone to get a Visa."

“Dream!” George exclaimed, perhaps a little bit too enthusiastically. “I wouldn’t *want* to cheat on you, that sounds horrible, I know what you’ve... “ He trailed off. “Unless you aren’t comfortable with it.”

“First kisses are special, yours shouldn’t be a lie.” Dream said, and George swallowed. How the hell was he supposed to explain that he *wanted* Dream to be his first kiss?

“I don’t know anyone here, and I trust you, you’re not gonna do anything to hurt me.”

Dream watched George closely, looking down to his hands. They held his phone tightly, thumbs running over the casing and trying to keep himself grounded and his nerves from showing as they spoke. God, if he was that nervous about kissing someone he knew there was no way in hell that he’d manage it with a total stranger. And as much as Dream wanted George to kiss someone he *loved* for his first kiss, he wanted to kiss *him*. The opportunity was right there in front of him: he didn’t want to take advantage of his friend but he saw the way George’s gaze cast down to his lips and Dream shifted just a little closer, resting a hand on George’s thigh.

“If you want to stop, just pull back okay? I won’t be upset, promise.”

“Okay.”

George’s voice sounded small, and Dream wanted to do everything in his power to make the moment at least *feel* special to George. He took his other hand and cupped his cheek, his thumb tracing the line of his beard as he watched his lips fall open slightly at the touch. It was enough for Dream to be certain that George was okay with what was going on, and he leaned forwards to close the gap between them and pressed his lips against George’s.

It felt so strange: he hadn’t kissed someone with a beard before, nor had he kissed a man before (though he hadn’t ruled it out). Dream only applied a little pressure against George’s lips, moving slowly and lightly to make sure that it wasn’t too much. He gave his thigh a slight squeeze and at that, he felt the kiss being returned. It wasn’t much, just a little, and he felt George relax under his grip. Dream smiled at his reaction and after another moment he pulled back, taking in a deep breath and letting his own shoulders fall. He wasn’t sure that it quite felt like the sparks flying he’d assumed it would feel when he first kissed someone he felt so intensely about, but perhaps that was because he was still in denial, maybe his mind was *making* it seem anticlimactic to respect George’s boundaries.

“Was that...” Dream began to speak, but stopped the moment he saw George reaching for and unlocking his phone, his eyes immediately flicking across the screen. While Dream wanted to give George a sense of privacy he was curious, and George wasn’t exactly trying to hide what he was looking at, so Dream glanced down at the screen in his hand and he felt a pang in his chest at what he saw. “Are you... Reading a wikihow article?”

“The YouTube videos weren’t all that helpful.” George replied sheepishly, though he was certain his dignity was already gone. “I want to make sure I’m doing it right, I don’t know if I am, it was-”

“It was *good*.” Dream told him. Sure, it wasn’t the best kiss he’d ever had, but for a first kiss George seemed to have grasped the basics. “We can practice more, don’t force yourself, we’ve got a couple of months okay? Just... Make it natural. We don’t have to do it at home, if you want a space where you *don’t* have to pretend to be in a relationship with me, but we can try. Okay?”

“Okay.” George said quietly, placing his phone down and sinking back onto the sofa. He closed his eyes for a minute, letting out a sigh and looking to Dream. “I need to go back to England at some point.” He said, and Dream looked at him with just a tad more disappointment than he’d expected. Maybe... *No*, he couldn’t get his hopes up. “Just to move my things across, sort out some paperwork, you and Lily can stay here. I’ll be a week, tops.”

“Alright.” Dream nodded. “We should get a ring before you go, then. It might be a good time to tell your parents and your friends.”

George couldn’t say anything to disagree with that, and that was how the pair found themselves walking through the crowded shopping mall. Lily was in her stroller, being pushed along by Dream and utterly fascinated by the strange sights and sounds around her, and George walked beside his fiancée. It still seemed so strange to call him that, so utterly bizarre to think that he was engaged to Dream. Maybe after today it wouldn’t seem quite so weird - maybe having a ring on his finger to serve as a constant reminder would make it all seem more *real*.

The jeweler they found themselves in was a chain, somewhere they wouldn’t have an issue with buying a ring as a same sex couple who had a child out of wedlock (a task that neither man had ever thought they’d have to complete in their lives), and it was thankfully quiet. They were surrounded by pristine cabinets that must have held hundreds of thousands - if not millions - of dollars worth in jewelry. Necklaces, broaches, earrings and, of course, rings were on show around them, and the pair peered through the glass cases around them whilst Lily amused herself by babbling away and occasionally waving to the man behind the counter.

“She’s a very friendly girl.” The man said, Dream and George looking up from where they stood and turning to face the shopkeeper, Lily letting out a giggle and breaking the silence in the store. Her happiness seemed to make everything a little bit easier as the man continued to speak. “What

size ring are you looking for? Any particular occasion, I might have a few suggestions?"

"Engagement." Dream said, his hand moving ever so slightly to the side and his fingers wrapping tightly around George's, as if making a point. "A little bit of a spur of the moment to ask the question but it felt right, I figured we could get a ring after if he said yes."

"I presume he said yes then." He smiled, beckoning the pair closer and pulling out a few tools to measure George's finger with. "Size 9, we've plenty that should fit you. Any particular gemstones you'd like? Diamonds are obviously the most popular but we have plenty of others."

"Maybe topaz?" Dream suggested, and George looked to him curiously. "It's blue, right? So you can see it." Dream addressed George this time, and he saw the slow smile that crept onto George's face. This was all fake and yet Dream *still* wanted to do this for him - it felt too good to be true. "Maybe topaz and diamonds, money isn't an issue."

"Dream-"

"What, it's not an issue, I want you to have something nice." Dream said, his attention returning to George and his eyes filled with a look that George could almost believe to be genuine. It was hard to remember that this was all an act when Dream's gaze was filled with so much love, but that when they stepped back inside their home they'd be back to whatever *normal* was. He decided, for a little while, to just enjoy it. So he gave Dream the same look in return and let himself relax into a smile.

"We've not got much with topaz and diamond, but I can have a look for something blue. We might have an aquamarine in your size - though if you do want something that doesn't quite fit it can be resized for you.

The shopkeeper disappeared through a small back door which left Dream, George and Lily alone, and George let a nervous laugh escape from his lips. As of right now things *weren't* feeling any more real to him, and to keep himself distracted he crouched down in front of the stroller to see Lily. She'd been quietly making noises for the last few minutes but the moment she saw George a smile burst onto her face and she cooed loudly, fingers outstretched as if trying to reach for him.

"Hiya." He said, grinning from ear to ear and offering her his hand to latch onto. "You having fun today?"

“She probably likes all the sparkly stuff.” Dream suggested, peering his head over to look at the pair before him. “You’re too young for diamonds, Lil. Maybe when you’re a little bit bigger you can have some plastic rings, or haribos, but I think it’s a while until you’re ready for engagement rings.”

George laughed at that, letting Lily tug his hand closer to her face and wrap her mouth around one of his fingers. Normally, if she was hungry, she’d start suckling on him but instead he felt her running his finger over her gums, and George looked up to Dream. “I think I better head to England sooner rather than later.” He said, Dream clicking the brake of the stroller down with his feet and leaning to put his weight on it.

“Yeah?”

“I think she’s gonna start teething soon, it’s not fair on you if you’re alone when that happens.”

“Alright, we’ll look at flights before we get home. We can probably find some stuff to help her through it while we’re here.”

“Red wine’s pretty good?” George suggested offhandedly, and Dream immediately frowned. George had sounded serious - *was* he serious?

“You realise she’s a baby, we’re not giving a baby *wine* .”

“Wait, you don’t do that here?” George asked, furrowing his brows just a little. “I’m not talking about getting a baby blackout drunk, Dream, I mean just dabbing a little bit on her gums. It’s supposed to soothe them, my parents used it on me and I turned out just fine.”

“There’s plenty of stuff we can use to help her that *isn’t* alcohol, alright?”

George went quiet, and while he’d only made a suggestion he hadn’t expected Dream to be so hostile towards it. They hadn’t clashed with any of their ideas on parenting yet, and it left an uncomfortable feeling in his stomach. He didn’t quite know how to deal with it, so he took in a breath and nodded, breaking eye contact.

“Alright.”

The atmosphere between them was tense for a few moments, Lily trying to make a few sounds despite George's finger still being held tightly in place, before the man returned with a selection of rings. George moved away slowly, Lily resistant to his motions and quickly becoming tearful when he *did* manage to get away, and so Dream busied himself with calming her down while the man spoke to George once more.

The discomfort in George's stomach was churning, guilt filling him as Dream picked Lily up and brought her into his arms while he was pulled aside to pick a ring. He wanted to forget about the ring and help Dream help Lily, but his attention was moved away from the pair and back to the shopkeeper as he began to speak.

"I've brought out a small selection, if there's any you like the look of let me know and I can walk you through them."

With Lily's cries softening it was easier to focus, Dream's shushing managed to calm her down as he rocked her in his arms, and George let himself look over the rings that were laid out on cushions before him. He could see some of the blue's more intensely than the others, the deeper and darker colours, and he instantly found himself pointing to one of the rings on the left. The man picked it up carefully, gesturing for George to hold his hand out, and slipped it onto his ring finger. George swore everything in that moment went dark, and as he blinked he felt a hand being placed on his back.

"Hey, you alright?"

Turning his head towards Dream's voice, George took in a breath and nodded - his mouth too dry to speak.

"All starting to feel very real, I imagine." The man chuckled, beginning to explain that the ring had a sapphire embedded with a small amount of diamonds surrounding it, but George wasn't listening. He was looking at Dream, who cradled their daughter in one arm and supported him with the other, and he hated the conflicting emotions that came from it all. He needed to keep it together, to keep on the disguise of love and adoration until he was alone and had time to really think through his emotions, so he settled his shoulders back and looked back to the rings before him.

"What about that one?" Dream asked, pointing to the ring in the middle. When he'd said that money wasn't an issue he truly meant it, and while the ring that George had on now was *nice* it didn't feel like the sort of thing he'd buy for someone he loved as much as George. The one he pointed to was on a gold band rather than silver, and the blue was just a little softer. The man took the first ring from George's finger carefully and slipped this on instead, and George found himself instinctively shifting his hand to watch how it caught in the light.

“Two carat tanzanite, with 0.15 carats of diamonds and an 18 karat gold ring. The tanzanite is finished in a cushion style, slightly elevated above the diamonds.”

George nodded, as if any of that meant anything to him, but he couldn't take his eyes off the ring itself. It was utterly beautiful, he could see the shifting shades of blue in the stone as he moved his hand and his teeth moved to bite his bottom lip ever so slightly. He was trying to keep his emotions in, his *real* emotions, but couldn't help the way that his eyes were glassing over with tears.

“I think that might be a yes to this one.” Dream said with a smile, looking down to Lily. “What do you think, does your dad like the ring?”

“It's *beautiful* ...” George said softly. “How much is it?”

“Pfft, like I'm telling you.” Dream replied. “Take Lily and go for a walk, I'm doing this bit without you here.” He said. Nodding, George slipped the ring from his finger and placed it back onto the cushion before taking Lily from Dream and fastening her back into her stroller. The movement had her cooing again, and as George pulled back he gave her the Technoplush and moved over to Dream for one last moment.

“I love you.” He said quietly, more meaning behind his words than he could ever muster up in any other situation, and he pressed a kiss to his lips. He lingered for just a moment, conscious that he was trying to find a balance of what was too long and too short of a kiss to have in front of other people.

“Love you too, I'll text you when I'm done.” Dream whispered, and George gave him a smile before pushing Lily out of the store ahead of him. He'd do as Dream had suggested now - find something for her to teeth on - and then he'd wait until his fiancée was done buying him a ring.

Even just *thinking* it seemed ridiculous, and Lily's coos and gurgles echoing around the mall were the only thing keeping him grounded.

###

Sitting out in their backyard that evening, letting the last of the light shine over them, the pair had put some distance between themselves. Normally they'd be side by side in whatever they did - knees touching, hands brushing, *something* to connect them - but tonight there was some kind of

barrier between them. The ring on George's finger felt heavy even as it caught the sunlight and refracted beautifully, and the silence between them felt different. Starting a conversation almost felt harder than continuing to sit the way they did, but Dream could always find a way to force words out.

"Do you still want to do this?"

"What?"

"You're completely sure you want to go through with marrying me, right?"

"Of course, for Lily." George said, shifting a little and trying to disguise the movement by turning his head to face Dream. "We're friends, she'll have two parents that love her, it'll be fine."

"Okay." The conversation was stilted, and Dream didn't like it one bit, but he pressed ahead. "Let's post about it, then. On Twitter. We could have some fun with the fans if nothing else?"

That made George smile, pulling his phone from his pocket and slipping easily into the role of someone that wanted to please his fans. It was much less nerve wracking to put on a show for a few hundred thousand people behind a screen than it was to do any of it in person, and he saw Dream's tweet the moment it was sent. George rolled his eyes and shook his head, scoffing.

"That's really the best you could do?"

@dreamwastaken: Hey @GeorgeNotFound will you marry me?

"Main account, it's serious." Dream teased, a smile on his face as he watched George's fingers move across his screen to reply.

@GeorgeNotFound: @dreamwastaken Oh so that's why I'm wearing a ring .

After the tweet was sent the two spent a good half an hour watching reactions roll in, not responding to anything, not even the seven calls from Sapnap, three from Bad, and the frantic texting from Skeppy, Ponk, Antfrost and others. They were blown away by the speed of which there was fanart of the two of them at the altar - George in an ill fitting wedding dress - and when they both liked the post everything seemed to spiral into more and more chaos.

“How long do we leave them hanging?” George asked, things finally seeming to calm down on their feeds just a little.

“I don’t know, d’you think Sapnap and Skeppy will get engaged if we don’t post anything soon?”

“Take a picture.” George said, feeling a little bolder after the laughter they’d shared. “You can post it, if you want, more people will see it on your account.”

The sun had finally set and the night sky above was dark, though the lights in Dream’s garden were just bright enough to illuminate George and the ring on his finger. Shifting back on the bench he slipped his phone between his hands and took a couple of pictures - *definitely* more than he’d need for Twitter - before he felt George grabbing one of his hands and wrapping their fingers together.

“What’re you--”

“It could just be a joke, but if they see us holding hands maybe they’ll believe us a little bit more?” George suggested, his fingers immediately loosening and pulling back. “We don’t have to.”

Dream found himself missing the feeling of George’s hand in his and quickly squeezed, stopping him from pulling away entirely. “No, it’s a good plan, it’ll work.” He said quickly, shifting closer to George and placing his hand down on his knee. Dream looked down at his phone, focusing himself on taking a good photo for Twitter rather than how close George’s hand was to his thigh, and he was thankful for the darkness that surrounded them for keeping the pinking of his cheeks from George’s sight as he felt himself blush at the thought.

When he stopped taking photos, their hands remained linked and neither of them made a move to pull away. Dream just tapped a little more slowly through his phone as he picked his favourite photos to use - two of George showing off the ring (in one of them he’d laughed, and his nose and eyes had scrunched up in the most *beautiful* way) and one of their hands joined together.

“Do you want to see before I post it?”

“I trust you.” George shrugged, and Dream took in a breath before he posted.

@dreamwastaken: This video, we coded it so that I am in love with @GeorgeNotFound

Before he even had a chance to look to George and see his reaction, replies were appearing by the dozen and he received another onslaught of notifications from their friends.

@sapnap: @dreamwastaken @GeorgeNotFound ANSWER YOUR GODDAMN PHONE DREAM

@SaintsofGames: @dreamwastaken @GeorgeNotFound O.o congratulations!!!!!!

@DropsByPonk: @dreamwastaken @GeorgeNotFound pog. champ. FINALLY!!

@Skeppy: @dreamwastaken @GeorgeNotFound no fucking way

@GeorgeNotFound: @dreamwastaken <3

“Are we dealing with them all tonight?” George asked, his hand finally pulling back from Dream’s as he brought his legs up onto the bench and tucked them beneath him. “Can it wait until tomorrow?”

As if on cue the universe answered the question for them - Lily began to cry. The sound was practically in stereo, they could hear her in her bedroom and on the baby monitor they’d brought out to sit beside them, and Dream got to his feet quickly.

“I’ve got her. We’ll sort it tomorrow. You wanted to look at England, right? Pull up some flights and we’ll see what we can do.”

Dream disappeared at that, sliding the door to his house closed behind him as he headed upstairs to find Lily and sort out whatever was wrong. It left George alone on the porch, listening to the sound of bugs around him as he quietly tapped on his screen and let his emotions free. For the first time since he’d woken up he was alone, not thinking about how to kiss Dream, or how to act with Dream in public, or scrambling to make up some formula for Lily. No, he was alone, it was quiet, and he could think.

And god *damn* was he fucked.

Everything that had been held back throughout the day began to come out, his stomach churning and twisting painfully as the hurt came through. He was in love with Dream, completely and utterly in love with Dream. He loved his smile, his laugh, his kindness. He loved how good he was at Minecraft, how attentive of a father he was and how caring of a friend he was. George loved seeing him in the mornings, the way his hair was tied into a messy bun while his pyjama bottoms sagged and he danced around the kitchen with Lily, and seeing him last thing at night as he whispered how much he loved her from the door of her bedroom. He loved how he made George feel *whole* , how he felt safe and loved no matter what was going on. Dream made him want to be *better* , he wanted to try harder and push himself further, and he wished more than anything that he could just *tell Dream* .

But Dream couldn't feel the same way about him. George was full of imperfections, mistakes, and even the parts of him that weren't *wrong* just weren't as good as *Dream* . Dream deserved so much better, and deserved a relationship with someone he loved, as George took in a deep breath. He felt hot tears running quietly from his eyes down his cheeks as he bit down on his bottom lip, stifling a sob in case Dream could hear him from Lily's bedroom. He focused on the ring on his hand, twisting it around his finger. This was fake, it was all fake. Dream didn't love him the way he pretended to, he needed to figure out a way to separate what was fake from what was real - their friendship from the relationship they were faking so he could stay in the US.

Before Dream came back downstairs, George booked his flight to the UK. He'd leave in a few days and would be in England for ten, he'd be back before the end of the month. It would give him some time to think things through, to get his emotions in check and get over his feelings for Dream. When he came back, everything would be so much easier. For now, he just needed to take a deep breath and reach out to the one person he *knew* he could trust with all this.

GeorgeNotFound: I'll be in England in a few days. Spoons?

Ponk: George man what is going *on* ??! Yeah we can go for a Spoons. You're paying tho.

GeorgeNotFound: I'll just tweet our table number out and we'll be sorted. I'll explain everything in person, see you in a few days.

Chapter End Notes

got half way through the bullet points of this chapter & realised i'd already hit 8k, figured i'd spare you all a 16k+ update & split it in two! we're deep into pinning town now, my friends. they'll figure their shit out eventually though!

Month Three: September (Part Two)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Dream hadn't been alone with Lily... *Ever*. Not truly. He'd been the only person awake at the same time as her, sure, but George had always been in the house and on hand to help if something went wrong. Except George had left for the airport that afternoon, heading to England to arrange for his things to be brought over and sign all the correct paperwork to ensure he could get a visa to stay, and that meant that Dream was on his own with their daughter. It would be ten hours until he landed - at least - and knowing he couldn't even reach out and call him if he needed to made him feel worse. He didn't think he was scared, not *really* - he knew how to take care of Lily - but there was something that had sunk in his stomach like a stone, something that had left him feeling sick to the core since he'd said goodbye in the airport.

His hands were wrapped around George's mug. George didn't need to know that Dream was using *his mug* while he was away, but Dream had found comfort in having a piece of him with him. With Patches curled up on his lap it was as if everything in the Universe was coming together to make him as comfortable as he could be, and he watched Lily rolling from her front to her back on the playmat. It amused her greatly, and her sweet giggles filled the house with joy. If things had felt empty without George by his side after the last few months, she did everything she could to fill that gap.

Still, the lack of an adult to talk to would become too much to bear before long, and so when Dream pulled his phone from his pocket and loaded up discord to see who was online, he tapped on his messages with Bad and opened up his camera. He'd discovered that sending pictures of Lily playing were a fairly surefire way of starting a conversation (and he *always* wanted to show his friends her latest achievement - snapping an action shot of Lily mid-roll would be a bonus). The picture was a little blurrier than the others, but Dream smiled as he hit send.

He moved himself off his sofa to sit beside Lily, the action enough to earn a delighted squeal and babbled syllables as she stopped rolling while on her stomach - pushing herself up and trying to hold her head high.

"Hiya, Lil." Dream said affectionately, his voice gentle as he adjusted to lie down and mimic her posture. It was a game they liked to play - one that seemed to bring her endless delight. She lowered her head back to the ground and let her arms stretch out in front of her and Dream did the same thing - his longer arms having to rest either side of her body. Lily watched him for a moment, letting out a soft giggle, then rolled to the right. She completed one full turn before looking back to her father, who grinned and rolled to match her. As they spent the next few minutes with Lily leading and Dream copying, she laughed. Dream did too - not his full blown wheeze that his fans loved so much, but the soft chuckle that he saved for times like this.

He planted a kiss on her forehead before he sat back up, sitting cross legged before her and watching her roll onto her back and reach for her toes. She seemed to have mastered the art of pulling her socks off, so Dream often took the decision to just not bother with them in the first place. If they were out of the house during the day he'd put some on her feet, but so many had already gone missing throughout their home that he didn't bother if he could help it.

While she was distracted with her toes he went back to his phone, clicking on the messages he'd received from Bad and typing out a response.

Bad: Oh Dream, she's an adorable little muffin!

Bad: She's growing so fast!

Dream: Are you free for a call?

Bad: It depends, am I going to talk to you or Lily?

Dream: Well she can't form words yet, so it'd be an interesting conversation if you spoke with Lily.

Dream waited for a moment before calling Bad, immediately clicking to turn on his camera. He'd gotten used to showing his friends his face more often now and they always seemed to appreciate seeing Lily play, hearing her laugh, and seeing the smile on Dream's face. Sure Bad would probably comment on the fact that his hair looked a little greasy, but it was tied into a bun on his head and he would wash it once Lily had gone to sleep for the night. It only took a couple of rings for his friend to answer, giving Dream time to move back to the sofa and lean with his back against the armrest rather than sit on it.

"Dream!" Bad said, his camera still loading but the smile obvious in his voice. "How are you? How's George?"

"He's in England." Dream replied, one hand moving to his face and rubbing his eyes as he spoke. "Well, on a plane going to England. He's moving his things over."

"I still can't believe you're engaged - you never even told us you were dating!"

“Sorry, we probably should have mentioned it at some point. It happened fairly quickly.” He chuckled. “We’ve not got an exact date yet but we were thinking about getting married in November, just after George’s birthday. I was planning on flying his parents out for his birthday to surprise him anyway so it’ll mean they’re already in the country.”

“Oh, November will be a lovely time to get married. How old will Lily be by then?”

“Six months.”

“Oh, she’ll be crawling Dream!” Bad smiled, and Dream switched cameras on his phone so he could show off Lily where she played. “She’s found her toes! She’s such a clever little girl.”

“She is.” Dream agreed, watching as Lily’s attention left her feet and moved to him as he shifted back into her field of vision. “She’s brilliant. She’ll love her Uncle Bad, too. You’ll be able to meet her at the wedding, if you can pry her out of the arms of her grandparents. My mom never seems to want to give her back when she’s been babysitting and I think when George’s parents meet her for the first time it’s going to be that but a *thousand* times worse. We’re gonna have to make sure they don’t smuggle her back to England.”

“Well you can come visit while George is in England if you want, I’m not too busy this week and if you wanted an extra pair of hands to help out...” Bad suggested, Dream turning the camera back around to face himself and giving his friend a smile.

“I might take you up on that. The house feels empty without George, it’s strange. I’ve been so used to having him here that now he *isn’t* next to me...”

“Come up at the weekend, Dream.” Bad told him. “I can sort out a hotel near my apartment, you don’t need to worry about a thing. You’ve got my address, right?”

“Right.” Dream said, rubbing at his eyes and yawning. “Thanks Bad, you’re a good friend, you know that right?”

“What, am I supposed to tell you not to visit when your fiancé is out of the country and you’re alone with your daughter for the first time? Besides, that little muffin is adorable, who could say no to that face?” Bad replied. “I’ll figure out a hotel and send you all the details this evening. Oh, what size clothes does Lily fit into at the moment?”

“Three to six, she’s growing as she’s expected to. We’ve got another doctor’s visit next week but it’s mostly for her vaccinations, I don’t know how I’ll cope without George there for that. She cried so much when she had her first lot of shots and I feel awful when I can’t get her to stop crying.”

“It’ll be alright Dream.” Bad told him. “She needs her vaccinations, and she cries because she can’t talk to you about how it feels. The cuddles make it all better, I promise you’re doing the best you can. You’re a good dad, I can tell.”

Dream nodded. He’d needed to hear that. “Thank you, Bad.”

As the conversation reached a slight lull, Lily took that as her cue to intervene. Her babbles were becoming a little louder and more distressed. Dream was able to recognise how she sounded in the minutes before tears came and he looked at the time, glancing to make sure she was safe as he got to his feet and started to move from the living room into his kitchen.

“I’m going to have to go, it’s almost someone’s dinner time.” He said, placing his phone on the counter and turning off his camera as he searched through his cupboards for baby bottles and formula. “But I’ll see you at the weekend, it’ll be nice to get out of the house.”

“Alright, take care Dream. And if you need anything before then just give me a call okay? I’ll try my best to help if I can.”

“Thanks Bad.” Dream replied, mixing the formula powder with milk in Lily’s bottle. As he said his goodbyes and the pair hung up he placed the bottle into the microwave, he popped his head back into the living room. Lily was being looked after by Patches now, the cat keeping her company and keeping her calm to buy Dream a couple more minutes before she put up a fuss and began to cry - something Patches did regularly enough that he believed she knew what she was doing.

With the bottle in his hand and the milk a little warmer than usual, Dream quickly headed up to Lily’s bedroom and placed the bottle on the cabinets beside her cot. He returned for his daughter a minute later, Patches jumping away into the kitchen as Dream scooped her into his arms and held her close to his chest. He spoke to her quietly as they went upstairs, muttering about the plans for her to meet her Uncle Bad, and pressed gentle kisses to her cheeks to keep her content as he placed her on her changing mat. He gave her the Technoplush to distract her as he removed her babygrow, changed her diaper, and dressed her into the soft panda sleep suit. Normally, he and George would do these things together - one of them would heat up her milk and choose a story while the other prepared her for bed. Doing everything by himself was a little different logistically, but manageable. He just missed having George beside him. He missed seeing him in the quiet

moments that would unfold and in the soft lighting of Lily's bedroom. That side of him was something that Dream knew no one else saw and he wanted to share another tired smile, or gentle gaze. Even though he knew, deep down, his feelings must be unrequited, he still wanted to take whatever George was willing to give him.

Pushing aside his feelings for another moment he sighed, picking Lily up and resting her in his left arm before he grabbed the bottle of milk for her and sat himself in the rocking chair in the corner of her room. He was satisfied that the milk had cooled enough for her to take it without complaint and he brought the bottle to her mouth, her lips latching on to the nip hungrily and her hands moving to try and grab the bottle. Dream felt little fingers brushing against his own and he watched as they moved ever so slightly while she fed. It was much easier to feed her when it was quiet, so he didn't make a sound. He simply rocked back and forth in the chair and enjoyed the moment. Her nose scrunched up from time to time, a hand sometimes leaving the bottle to rub at her eyes or push hair from her face. Dream just smiled, the thumb of his left hand slowly brushing against her legs to give her a little extra comfort and contact while she drank.

He watched on lovingly as the bottle quickly became empty, placing it on the floor beside the chair before shifting his hold on her to pat her back and wind her gently. After a few minutes of quiet burping, Dream felt her body begin to still. Her legs were like deadweights dangling against his chest and her head was horizontal on his shoulder - the tiniest of pinches of his neck the only sign that she hadn't quite drifted off yet.

Dream gave her his right hand to hold onto rather than let her continue to grasp at his neck, and he stood up to pace her bedroom slowly to help her doze off. He wasn't going to bother trying to read to her - she was already almost asleep and disturbing her would only slow that process down: he would have plenty of time over the next ten days to make up for missing one night of stories.

When she stopped moving entirely he smiled, resting his head on top of hers gently to help her feel safe while she slept. He waited until he felt her breathing become a little slower than it had been during the day to decide that she was finally, truly, asleep, before placing her in her cot and pulling a blanket over her sleeping form. As he left her bedroom, Dream turned on the baby monitor and headed for a quick shower before he spent his evening alone. Maybe he'd stream, it had been a short while since he'd streamed and playing on the SMP sounded like a good way to keep his mind off George.

George, who he loved with all of his heart despite knowing that the feelings he held were one sided. George, who was giving up his life in England to move to America and stay with him, to help him raise a child. George, who he would be marrying in less than two months...

Yes, he needed a distraction, and starting a little chaos on the server would be the best way to do that.

#

George had arranged to meet with Ponk on the Friday he was in the UK for. Originally the plan had been to visit a Wetherspoons for a drink and just *talk* about things, but after spending a few days with his parents and signing paperwork for his visa George wanted to get out of the city and do something to clear his head.

He'd managed to convince Ponk to join him for a day in the Cotswolds. Autumn was on the horizon and the leaves on the trees were turning a beautiful golden colour, with the grass beneath their feet dry after a week with no rain and wildlife scurrying about the forest floor to search for food for their hibernation in the winter. Out here, with fresh air and no one but the two of them to walk and talk, things felt a little easier on his shoulders. The ring on his finger didn't feel quite as heavy, his heart didn't feel like it was shattering.

"When do we talk about the elephant in the room?" Ponk asked. "Because the last time I saw you, you were a bachelor, now you're a dad *and* you're engaged, and you've got an awful beard."

"It's not an awful beard, why does no one else like the beard?" George joked, stalling for time before broaching the real question. "Yeah." He laughed awkwardly, his hands in his pockets as they walked up the gradual slope of the hill they found themselves on. "I suppose I am. It's a bit of a long story."

"We've got plenty of time."

"Lily - the little girl - was left on Dream's doorstep when I went to stay with him. We took her in, Dream legally adopted her, I had a couple of months on my visa anyway so I stayed to help. We agreed that the arrangement worked pretty well and figured if we got married I'd be able to stay in the US longer - and legally adopt Lily - so here we are."

"Arrangement?" Ponk raised an eyebrow. "That's a funny word for *dating*."

"We... We *aren't* dating." George confessed. "To get all the paperwork done properly we'll need people to believe that we've been dating and we got married for reasons other than just wanting a visa, but I can't lie to everyone. I *need* to tell someone." George admitted, looking to Ponk with desperation on his face. "I'm in love with him, Ponk. We're raising a child together and getting married but it's all fake, it's for convenience, he doesn't love me back and I have to pretend to everyone we know that we're in love. He was my first kiss and I *love him*, and whenever we're out

and about he's so good at it. He's so good at loving me, at making me believe it's real, but then we'll go home and sit on opposite sides of the sofa. There'll always be space between us, I can't stand the idea that I'm in love with him and pretending, to him, that I'm not, while pretending to the outside world that I am."

"Oh my God, *George* ." Ponk laughed. "You're the biggest idiot I've ever met."

"That... That isn't *helpful* , Ponk." George said, stopping in his tracks. "I'm in love with Dream, this is a disaster. It's everything I've ever wanted but it's all a lie, to him none of this means *anything* . I've not even been able to sleep in the same bed as him since he bought the ring-"

"You've been sleeping in his bed? George, wake up! In the nicest way possible, man, you're blind."

"What are you talking about?"

"Who suggested getting married?"

"He did..."

"Why would he suggest that if he didn't want it?" Ponk asked, starting to walk again with George following at his side. "This isn't all fake, Lily *is* his daughter, he's not just going to ask anyone to marry him to help look after her. Has he asked Bad? Or Sapnap? *No* , he asked *you* ."

"That doesn't mean-"

"Show me the ring, George." He said, George slowly pulling his hand from his pocket and spreading his fingers before Ponk to let him look at it. Even now after a week of wearing the ring, his heart still beat faster whenever he looked at it. The deep blue of the tanzanite gem, the diamonds embedded around it, even the gold band itself... It was beautiful, it was so much more than George could ever have asked for.

"How much was the ring?" Ponk asked, George shrugging as he brought his hand back to his side.

“He wouldn’t tell me.”

“He wouldn’t-- *George!* If he wasn’t going to tell you how much it cost it’s not gonna be because it was from the bargain bin. There’s so many diamonds, the stone is huge, it must have been thousands of dollars.”

George blinked, his gaze fixed on the ground beneath him as they walked. “Why would he spend that much on a ring? It’s not real, he doesn’t-”

“Because he loves you! Man, if we were getting fake married I’d probably get you a haribo ring at most. Dream has asked you to be part of his family, asked to marry you, given you a ring that would take most people years to afford... Isn’t it obvious?”

George swallowed. Ponk was making sense and it terrified him. What if it was true? What if Dream did love him? He wanted it more than he could put into words, but the thought of it being true seemed to frighten him more. Dream hadn’t said anything about this being real for him, though every gesture he made seemed to suggest that was the case. If it was real, what would they do about it? He didn’t know what he was supposed to say without risking it all - and there was so much more at risk now than there had been several months ago. But wasn’t that what love was? Risking everything for another person and putting complete trust in them?

“What am I supposed to do now?” He asked quietly, raising his head again to look at Ponk.

“When you get back to America, *tell him* . Figure it out together.”

“Okay...” George said, taking in a breath and giving his friend a smile. “I’ll try.”

“If you don’t, I *will* be releasing the winter wonderland vlog.”

“You wouldn’t.”

“Don’t test me Gogy.” He joked, the pair of them laughing easily as they continued with their walk. It felt good to have been able to talk to someone about it honestly and openly, and with a few more days left in England before he was back with Dream and Lily - his *family* - he had time to figure out how the hell he was going to start this conversation with Dream.

###

Living in the same state as Bad, the drive to visit him hadn't been too long. Dream had figured that the best way to get there would be to set off early in the morning, and so after Lily had fallen asleep after her second night feed he strapped her into the carseat, put his overnight bag in the trunk, and began his drive. By the time he'd joined route 19 the sun was beginning to rise but the traffic was still light and he made good time. Lily amused herself with Technoplush and a mirror for the most part, Dream only having to pull over once to change her before they arrived in Bad's hometown. Dream had the directions to his address on his GPS system and before long Dream had parked outside a brick townhouse in the centre of a small town. As he pulled his phone from the glovebox and scrolled through his contacts to find Bad and phone to let him know they'd arrived, he heard Lily cooing from behind him.

"I know, we're here with Uncle Bad. He's going to be so excited to meet you." Dream smiled to himself, looking over his shoulder and back to Lily as he brought his phone to his ear. She was sucking on the ear of the Technoplush and Dream chuckled a little, making a mental note to prepare some formula for her as soon as he had a chance.

"Hello!" Dream said, his voice a little tired from driving for so long but still happy to hear his friend's voice. "We're outside. I'm going to grab Lil from her seat if you want to come say hello, otherwise we'll be up in a minute."

After Bad confirmed that he'd come down to help Dream with anything he needed to carry inside he hung up, and Dream pocketed his phone before stepping out of the car and making his way round to the passenger side door to take Lily out of her seat.

"You've been brilliant, Lil." He said gently, unbuckling the straps holding her in place and pulling her out of the car and into his arms. She had thick lilac tights on and a long sleeved shirt, with a pair of tiny dungarees on top - all dressed up for her special day of meeting someone new. When he had a chance he'd need to get some pictures of her to send to George, knowing that he'd missed her terribly while he'd been away. Dream couldn't imagine spending so long away from Lily, the mere thought of ten days in England without her broke his heart and so he was content to send George as many photos as he needed.

As he shut the car door behind him and watched Lily react to the gentle breeze of a new town (her eyes widening to look up at the trees and her hair blowing into her face) he heard a door behind him open and he gave a quiet gasp as he spoke to his daughter.

"Is that who I think it is?" He asked her, Lily cooing and kicking her legs as she saw a stranger

approaching her over Dream's shoulder.

"Hello, little muffin." Bad said softly, Dream chuckling and watching Lily as she reacted to Bad's arrival. She'd been awake for a little while and thankfully didn't greet him with tears, though he could feel her tensing up just a little in his arms.

"It's okay Lil, this is your Uncle Bad." Dream told her quietly, a reassuring kiss pressed to her head as he turned himself around to face Bad. "Hi Bad, I bet you didn't expect this for a first meeting." As he spoke, Lily turned her head around to look at Bad again while she sat in her father's arms. She was safe there, but her eyes were too curious to look away.

"It's weird to think of you as a dad, normally people do the whole dating and marriage thing before becoming parents. Not that there's anything wrong with the way you and George have done this, it's just not what I expected." He said. "How is it?"

"Easier when George is here. Looking after her alone is exhausting. She *really* wants to figure out crawling."

"Does she?" Bad asked, taking a step closer and gauging Lily's reaction before he gave her a bright smile. "Are you going to cause mischief while your daddy is in England?"

"Definitely." Dream chuckled, using his free hand to pinch her cheek lightly and make her giggle a little. As she smiled, Bad cooed, before he led his friend inside. They sat together for a couple of minutes in Bad's living room, Lucy excited by the new arrivals and barking loudly in a way that had taken Lily by surprise at first. As the infant became more accustomed to her new surroundings and to Bad, Dream handed the little girl over as he went to heat up her formula - giving Bad to have a chance to hold the little girl in peace. Over the last few days she had gotten an awful lot better at holding her head up without any support, and so Bad had sat with his legs crossed and let her sit in his lap, facing him, ready to shift his hand behind her head if he felt her slipping.

"Hello." He said, greeting her again as she looked at him curiously. "I'm your Uncle Bad, I'm one of your dad's friends. My job is to spoil you rotten, so don't tell them but I might have gotten some presents for you." Bad said kindly, smiling at Lily and watching as she reacted in the only way she knew how. She reached for his glasses, and as Bad leaned his head back to keep them out of reach he felt her head fall against his chest. As he looked back down he shifted his hold on her, giving her a little bit more support as he laughed.

"My glasses aren't your present, I need them to see. When your dad comes back in I'll fetch your presents." He told her. Lily's hands reached up toward his face for a second time, a giggle leaving

her lips followed by her loudly babbling to herself.

“You’re such a clever little girl, but my *goodness* are you mischievous. You’ll get on very well with your Uncle Skeppy, he’ll teach you all kinds of tricks when you’re older.”

“That is an excellent point.” Dream said, coming back into the living room and watching as Lily continued to reach for Bad’s glasses. “Skeppy is to be supervised at all times, I don’t know what I’d do if he babysat her and I came back to find out she’s learned how to get into cupboards and help herself to snacks.”

“I think Skeppy would be really good at babysitting.” Bad said. “He’d be good at making her laugh and keeping her happy, he always makes me laugh.”

Dream wordlessly raised an eyebrow, giving Bad a knowing smile as he reached for Lily. “She’s been awfully good for someone that hasn’t had her lunch yet, she must like you.” He said. Bad gave Lily to Dream, and as Dream sat back down Lucy jumped to sit beside him. She rested her head on his thigh as Lily started to drink and he just shook his head with a smile. “I can’t give you any attention right now, I need both hands Lucy. I’m sorry.”

The dog didn’t move away, but Bad did. He disappeared out of the room for a second before reappearing with a bag full of toys.

“Bad--”

“Dream, don’t say it.” Bad said quickly. “I take my job as an uncle very seriously.”

“You still didn’t have to do this.” He said. “But thank you. When she’s finished feeding she can have an investigation of what’s in there.”

Dream looked down to Lily in his arms. Normally when she drank her formula she grabbed a hold of the bottle, but she was distracted today and that was making feeding a little more difficult. As she unlatched from the nib of the bottle and her attention moved to the dog at her feet Dream sighed softly. She’d only had half of what she normally ate, but she hadn’t been crying to be fed earlier. Instead of fighting a losing battle he placed the bottle beside him, sitting her upright in his lap and winding her that way while she stared at Lucy.

“She loves Patches.” Dream explained. “I don’t think she’s met a dog yet, she must be a little confused.”

The two men watched Lily and Lucy closely, both girls curious about the other. After Lily had burped, Dream took his free hand and scratched the top of Lucy’s head.

“Just like kitty at home, see.” Dream said. “Be gentle like you are with kitty.”

As he moved his hand back Lily leaned forward, one of her arms outstretched towards Lucy. The little dog, to her credit, stayed still despite the small hand approaching her. Dream was ready to pull Lily’s hand away if she acted too aggressively, but she moved slowly - driven equally by curiosity and caution. When her hand met the soft fur of Lucy’s head she squealed, her fingers curling around the white locks and moving back and forth.

“Careful.” Dream said, his free hand moving to take Lily’s hand away from the dog’s fur before she knotted it terribly, and instead he guided her fingers over Lucy’s coat. “Stroke her like this.”

Lucy barked, and Lily pulled her arm back quickly as her face dropped. She *didn’t* enjoy being barked at - that *wasn’t* like Patches - and as Bad scolded Lucy for barking at Lily, Dream was quick to soothe his daughter. He saw her eyes change from curious to afraid and he could tell that they were glossing over with tears, her face scrunching up and lips parting to let out the first few whimpers before she truly began to cry.

“Hey, Lil, it’s okay.” He said gently. Dream pulled her close to his shoulder, one hand wrapped around her and holding her waist and the other on the back of her head, gently running through her dark hair as she cried against him. “It’s okay, you’re okay. Lucy was just saying hello.” He reassured her, rocking her a little in his arms and pressing a kiss to the side of her head. “She’s a dog, she can’t talk like I can, or your daddy, or Uncle Bad, she didn’t mean to scare you.”

As much as he hated when Lily cried, he loved the time he could spend holding her like this. Now that she was growing and getting older she enjoyed playing and exploring the world, learning how to do different things, and even if it was wonderful to see her reaching all kinds of milestones it always hurt a little bit in his chest that he was spending less and less time holding her close. He cherished the time he could spend with her cradled close to him, when he could whisper soft words to reassure her and give the kisses and squeezes she needed to feel loved. As her cries became soft whimpers he moved the hand on the back of her head to her face, wiping the tears away from her cheeks and continuing to rock her.

“You’re good at being a dad, Dream.” Bad told him with a fond smile on his face. “She’s in good

hands.”

Dream gave him a smile, thanking him silently so he could let his focus remain on his daughter for a while longer. When she had calmed down and was beginning to try to wriggle free from his grasp once more he shifted onto the floor, placing Lily on her stomach on the carpet as he reached for the bag of gifts from Bad.

“Shall we see what your uncle has done to spoil you then?” He asked Lily, the girl pushing her head up to look around as Dream rustled the bag to capture her attention.

At the top of the bag was a little hat - and when Dream pulled it out to see the pattern and shape of it he laughed.

“That is *too cute* .” He said, immediately starting to put the crocheted garment onto Lily’s head. He hadn’t even gotten it on before her hands were moving to try and pull it off, Bad and Dream both laughing as he pulled the brown fabric over her ears to make it a little more difficult for her to remove. He just needed it to stay on her head long enough to get a picture for George.

“Come hold her, I think you should be in the picture. It’s your present, after all.”

After a moment of movement, Dream pulled his phone from his pocket and snapped several quick pictures of Bad holding an irritated looking Lily, her hands still trying to remove the hat from her head. Lily, of course, didn’t understand why she needed to wear it. To her it was just getting in the way, but Dream and Bad could both appreciate the hat crocheted to look like a cupcake - complete with frosting, sprinkles, and a cherry on top.

“I couldn’t find one that looked like a muffin.” Bad explained as Dream showed him the photo, laughing at one in particular where Lily had her lips pouted and nose scrunched up.

“Do you mind if I put it on Twitter? I don’t think I’ve posted a picture with her face in it just yet.”

“I would be honoured.” Bad said, Lily finally managed to remove the hat from her head and was now holding it in front of her face as she ran her fingers over the new textures. Despite the bag full of gifts beside them, she seemed perfectly content with ignoring the toys in favour of learning about the new item she’d already been given. She was quiet while she played with it, giving Dream and Bad a chance to catch up and have the grown up conversations that Dream had missed having since George had gone back to England. All in all, it was a wonderful day, and Bad promised to

show Dream and Lily around the two more the next day before they returned back to Orlando in the evening.

Dream and Lily left in the late afternoon, Dream wanting to get to the hotel before he needed to feed Lily and get her ready for bed. It wasn't far from Bad's apartment, but by the time he'd checked in and brought his bags inside Lily was starting to kick up a fuss. She'd been good for the week since George had left and he'd been surprised it had lasted this long, but tonight was clearly the point at which she decided she missed her other father too much to go to sleep peacefully for Dream. After she'd finished her feed and Dream had started to get her ready for bed, she'd started crying and wouldn't stop. He'd cuddled her, tickled her, read her stories and even gone for a walk up and down the corridors of the hotel to see if that would help her fall asleep, but nothing would calm her down. He was beginning to feel exhausted himself and he only had one plan left.

He and George had called around the same time every night since he'd been away: 7pm in Florida and 1am in the UK. It was only 6:45pm, but George would never say no to an earlier call (at least, he hoped), and without giving it a second thought he immediately began to facetime George. He didn't care that he looked like a mess - normally he'd try to at least run a comb through his hair before turning on his camera for George - he was more focused on the inconsolable child tucked against his chest. Her face was bright red and her tears had long since been shed, replaced now with nothing more than wails. It broke his heart that he couldn't give her the comfort that she needed at that moment.

"Dream? Is everything alright?"

George's voice came through his phone speakers with a sense of urgency, and Dream gave him a weak smile before trying to turn the screen around so Lily could look at it.

"Lil, honey, look. It's daddy." He said gently. "George, can you talk to her? She's been crying for an hour, I can't get her to stop, I think she misses you."

"Sweetie?" George said, his voice much softer than it had been before. With the phone screen turned to face Lily, Dream couldn't see the expression on his fiancée's face, but he could imagine it. A gentle smile, comforting eyes, soft brows and nothing but *love* for the little girl that missed him. "Sweetheart, oh *sweetheart* stop crying, everything's okay. You've got your dad there and I'm here, see, I'm still here. I know I can't give you a hug right now but when I come home I'll give you the biggest cuddle *ever*, I promise."

Lily's cries seemed to be growing a little bit quieter, Dream letting out a sigh of relief and leaning back against the headrest of his bed for the night as George continued.

“You’ve been so good for your dad so far while I’ve been gone, do you think you can keep that up for me? I promise I won’t be gone for too much longer, and when I come back I never have to go away again, it’ll be the three of us forever.”

Forever. Dream smiled at that, the idea of having Lily and George as his family forever. He’d never force George to stay - not if he didn’t want to - but he felt butterflies in his stomach and he couldn’t help the happiness that came with the promise.

With Lily starting to calm down, her hands were reaching for the phone to try and grasp the image of her father and she began to babble.

“He can hear you.” Dream told her. “But he can’t touch you, you’re stuck with cuddles from dad at the moment I’m afraid.”

With Lily less restless he shifted the phone so that both he and Lily could see George on the screen. George’s eyes seemed to light up just a little more when Dream appeared in frame again, and he couldn’t help but hope that it wasn’t just a trick of the camera.

“She misses you.”

“I miss her.” George replied. “I miss you.”

“I miss you too.” Dream said quietly, his fingers running through Lily’s hair. “We’re visiting Bad at the moment.”

“I saw the picture on Twitter, she *hated* that hat.”

“Oh absolutely.” Dream laughed. “It’s very cute though, when she’s grown a little more and it’s harder for her to take off I’ll be putting her in it as much as possible.”

“Our little muffin.” George said, laughing to himself as he watched Lily. She’d paused babbling for a moment to focus on her toes, but had resumed once more when both her fathers had gone quiet. That, of course, was when it happened.

Her favourite sounds to make when she babbled usually resembled *dada* , *gaga* and *gee* . She made plenty of other noises, but those were her favourites and she revisited them often. Tonight she was fixated on her g's, and after several long seconds of repeating *gagaga* over and over again, the sounds she used changed.

“Ga ga ga ga goh gee!”

Dream laughed at the noises, but George was simply staring with his mouth slightly open and his eyes wide.

“Dream, did you hear that?”

“Hear what?” He asked, raising an eyebrow. “What are you looking like that for?”

Lily continued to babble to herself, unaware of the confusion of one father and the amazement of another.

“She just said her first word!”

“What?” Dream began to laugh. “George, what are you talking about?”

“Gogy! She said Gogy!”

George’s exclamation had Dream laughing harder, quickly turning into a wheeze and gaining the attention of Lily as she watched him practically double over with how hard he was laughing.

“It’s not funny, Dream, she said her first word! I was her first word!”

“Gogy isn’t a word!” Dream laughed. “She’s just making sounds you idiot.”

“Everyone calls me Gogy, it’s my nickname, it’s her first word!”

“You’re so dumb.”

“Maybe, but that *was* her first word, I’m telling you!”

“George, she’s four months old, she’s got no idea what she said.”

“Try it. Lily, sweetheart, can you say *Gogy* again?”

“That’s cheating!”

“Goh-gee.” Lily mimicked, giggling as she saw (and heard) George cheering. Dream groaned softly as his own laughter subsided, still vehemently denying that *Gogy* counted as a word. It was an argument that could have continued for hours, but Lily had eventually fallen asleep and George had followed closely behind her. For a short while, Dream had let the call continue in the darkness of his bedroom, just watching George sleep. He’d missed him sorely, and the next few days would be hard, but before too long he knew that he’d be back in America and they’d all be together again.

#

The flight back to Orlando had maybe been the longest flight George had ever taken. It wasn’t the trans-Atlantic flight that seemed to take forever, those 8 hours had passed quickly, it was the last 3 between Washington and Orlando that really seemed to stretch out forever. Knowing that when he landed he’d see Dream and Lily again, *knowing* that he was here to stay with them now, and knowing that the odds of Dream returning his feelings were high... He wasn’t going to mention it straight away, but he had already been planning for how he would say it. Dream’s family could babysit and he could take him out for a fancy meal, or maybe they could just be having a quiet night in together while Lily slept. Maybe he could do it on his birthday... He wanted to, if nothing else, try to get it out before they were married. That way if Dream *didn’t* return his feelings it wouldn’t be too late to do something about it. He tried not to let that eventuality play out in his mind as the plane touched down on the runway, and George was the first to grab his bag from the overhead luggage and exit. Nothing was going to come between him reuniting with his family.

Well, perhaps border control would, but he had his passport and all his documents ready and signed. The process was as quick as it could be and before long he’d made his way into the main section of the airport. Without any checked luggage he didn’t need to wait for the plane to be unloaded before he could leave to find Lily and Dream. It took everything in his power not to run - not wanting to arouse suspicion from any of the heavily armed guards that surrounded him - but with a quick text sent to Dream to let him know that he’d be appearing any moment now he walked as fast as he dared.

The corridors felt like an endless maze, teasing him with their poor signage and the constant twists and turns, but relief finally came as the corridor led to a wide room with white walls, an abundance of screens showing flight times and advertisements, and rows of excited friends and family members awaiting others that had been on George's flight.

Dream stuck out like a sore thumb. He was standing rather than sitting, leaning against the handle of a pushchair and staring at his phone. His hair was a mess, tied into a ponytail rather than a bun, and his stubble hadn't been shaved in several days.

George had never been more in love.

He didn't hold back now, breaking out into a run across the tiled floor and extending his arms. The sound of his footsteps was enough for Dream to look away from his phone and the moment his eyes met George's his face lit up. His grin was larger than he thought possible, his eyes widening slightly and he stepped back from the pushchair just enough to give George the room he needed to wrap his arms around him. Dream returned the embrace immediately, squeezing him tightly and holding him close. They'd both missed each other desperately over the past ten days - missing the touch of someone they cared for, the support they could give and take from the other - and after two months together, a mere ten days apart had been painful. The hug was filled with so many unspoken words and hidden feelings, and that alone would have been enough for Dream. If holding George like this was the most he would be given, he would take it.

But that wasn't the case. George's hands moved to Dream's cheeks and he pulled Dream's head down as he pushed himself up on the tips of his toes. He pressed his lips against Dream's, closing his eyes as he moved his fingers over the freckles of his cheeks and let their lips dance together. They were both aware of their surroundings and neither deepened the kiss too much further - but teeth grazed the others lips and their bodies were pressed close together.

If anyone looked at the pair, they would believe the relationship to be real and solid, based in feelings and not convenience. Dream and George could both believe the same in that moment - both clinging to hope that this would all work out in the end - and as they eventually pulled away from each other to breathe again they exchanged smiles and laughter.

"Hi." Dream said breathlessly, his hands resting on George's waist. Things felt different than before - the affection they shared felt less forced and less faked, and the intimacy felt less uncomfortable.

"Hello." George replied, his hands still cupping Dream's cheeks and his thumbs running over his cheekbones. "When did you last shave?"

"You're not allowed to talk about my stubble when you've still got a beard."

"My beard looks *good*, thank you very much."

The two of them shared their gaze in silence for a moment longer, before George broke away to look at Lily. She was fast asleep in her pushchair, tucked up in blankets with the Technoplush beside her head, she looked peaceful and George couldn't help but smile. His heart was racing in his chest, and he'd never been happier.

"Should we head home, George?" Dream asked him quietly, his hand moving to reach for George's.

"Yeah." George replied, taking Dream's hand and locking their fingers together. Home was with Dream and Lily, he knew that now, and he was finally here to stay.

"Let's go home."

Chapter End Notes

yes it's been about 7 weeks since i updated this fic we don't need to talk about that xD i'm having so much fun with the adventure fics that i just have a little less motivation for modern au's so when i hit a bit of writers block i kinda just let it happen... but hey! the update is here! maybe i'll post the october chapter before christmas!!

thank you to everyone that stuck around to wait for this - i told you it wasn't forgotten! hopefully this chapter was enough to make up for your patience <3 as always, feel free to leave a comment & some kudos, they're hugely appreciated & do help me to keep up the motivation! (oh, & let me know if you're team "gogy is a word" or team "george you're an idiot"!)

Month Four: October

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Something had changed when George returned from England. It hadn't been discussed, but Dream didn't need to talk about whatever had happened to bring George back into his bed.

It was, he reminded himself, still entirely platonic: their engagement was strictly a public affair, an excuse for George to stay, and George simply shared his bed because it was the only bed they *had* in the home now that the guest bedroom had been converted into Lily's bedroom. At some point, Dream supposed they could move somewhere bigger and George could have his own space again, but for now Dream let himself indulge selfishly in waking up with George by his side again.

That day, Dream woke up warm. Not because of the October heat, or because his air conditioning had broken, but because George had - during the night - tangled their legs together and thrown an arm around the younger man's waist. When this had all begun Dream might have tried to pull away, but now he felt as if he was so far down the rabbit hole of being in love with a man that didn't love him back (whilst marrying him to help him get a visa and faking a relationship to ensure it all worked) that it barely mattered anymore. Their friendship was still just that - a friendship - and Dream would make sure it stayed that way.

But right now, George was still sleeping, and he didn't have to pull back to preserve that friendship. Right now, he could simply lift a hand and place it against the other's cheek, thumb softly tracing over the smooth, unblemished skin. A smile teased its way onto his face as he admired just how beautiful George was when he slept: he loved how long his eyelashes were, how his lips were plush and pink, and how his beard needed trimming... He could have lost himself in how perfect all of George was, but instead he was pulled back to reality by tiny fingers brushing against his wrist.

Lily had slept between the two of them - she was the reason that Dream wasn't flush against George's chest - and Dream looked down to her with a fond smile on his face.

"Good morning, Lil." Dream moved his hand into Lily's reach, the little girl grabbing hold of his thumb and index finger and pulling them straight into her mouth to suckle on. It kept her quiet, so Dream let out a quiet chuckle and ran his fingers softly over her gums. Over the past few days she'd been keen to put anything she could into her mouth, and he was *fairly certain* that meant she was getting close to cutting her first tooth.

Dream was more than content to spend the rest of the morning like that, lying in bed with his fiancée and daughter, but Lily's stomach was quick to rouse him. As soon as his fingers were no longer a

satisfying snack and she began to tear up, he got to his feet and scooped her out of bed, trying to give George a chance to sleep and fix the remnants of his jet lag. His morning routines with Lily had become a lot easier after nearly two weeks of just the two of them, and before long he was standing in the kitchen and pulling faces at her. He'd bought a highchair for the kitchen while George was away and had started letting Lily sit in it while he heated up her formula, getting her used to sitting upright and associating the chair with meal times before she was ready to tackle solids. That was going to be a messy adventure, and it reminded Dream of more conversations he needed to have with George.

Patches sauntered into the kitchen, her presence distracting Lily immediately - the girl beginning to babble cheerfully to her feline friend. It gave Dream a moment to grab a pen and some paper to write down the things he needed to talk to George about. So far, it was simple, but he smiled as he added the third item:

- *Wedding Planning*
- *Solid foods*
- *Dog?*

With Lily amusing herself with Patches from where she sat - and keeping herself upright without any trouble - Dream didn't bother moving her from her highchair. For the most part, when she ate, she tried to hold her bottle on her own, but she still hadn't quite grasped the technique behind *grasping* and Dream made sure to keep it steady even when her hands moved away or she became distracted. It was good practice - she'd figure it out soon enough.

When George entered the kitchen a short while later, his hands ruffling Lily's hair and making her squeal as he headed toward the toaster, Dream's smile widened. George wasn't looking in his direction when he spoke, and Dream could've melted at how sleepy his voice was.

"Mornin'." He said, rubbing at his eyes as he turned around to lean against the kitchen counter. "How're you?"

"We're doing alright, aren't we Lil?" Dream asked, Lily raising her hands above her head and squealing again as she heard her name. "How did you sleep?"

George shrugged, his face scrunching up as he yawned. "I figured I should come help out rather than spend the day in bed. Are we doing anything exciting today?"

"We need to plan a wedding." Dream said. "We've got a month until we're supposed to be getting married, we should probably send out some invitations. My parents won't stop texting me about

the fact that they haven't gotten theirs yet."

George's reply came in the form of a hum as he filled the kettle (which he had *insisted* on bringing from the UK) with water, flicking it on to boil and reaching for his mug.

"Has she had her breakfast?"

"She won't finish the bottle." Dream replied. "I think she's about ready to teeth, it'll be good to stay home and get everything planned if she's going to be upset all the time."

George nodded, his attention turning to the list that Dream had left on the counter. The first two things didn't surprise him, but the third had him raising eyebrows.

"Strange shopping list." He said, the smile evident in his tone even before he turned back to face Dream. "A dog?"

"When she's on solids, do you *really* want to be cleaning up after her?"

"I see why people think you're the smart one." George laughed, Dream pulling a face of mock offense. "Maybe after we've done the whole wedding thing? Are we taking a honeymoon?"

"Shut up." Now it was Dream's turn to laugh. In reality, it was nothing more than a thin disguise for the pain he felt. George's question was enough, just for a moment, for him to forget that this whole thing was fake. It was enough for him to forget that George just needed a visa to live in America, and that he *wasn't* marrying Dream or raising a daughter with him because they were in love - it was convenience alone that had been the reason for his agreement. For a brief moment, Dream imagined the two of them, newly married and in love vacationing on some tropical island - or perhaps in snow covered mountains - but that was not to be.

This wasn't real.

"We've got to look after Lily, I'm sure people will believe that we're putting our daughter first."

"Sounds reasonable."

With that, George was focused on his coffee again, and Dream had a moment while his back was turned to compose himself.

“What about November 7th?” George asked. “It’s a Saturday, it’s just after my birthday, then we’ve got everything done in one go and just have to wait for Christmas.”

“And Thanksgiving.” Dream pointed out. “You’re in America now George, my parents will want to have a big dinner.”

“Do you think we could go to England for Christmas, then?” George asked. “Or New Year? We don’t have to but it’d be nice. I’ve just got a lot of traditions with my family, it’ll be strange not doing them.”

“We can figure it out.” Dream replied. George had almost sounded uncertain when he’d asked, so as he turned back around with his mug now full of coffee he offered a smile. “We’ll figure out getting married, then we can start thinking about winter - it’d be nice for Lily to see snow, and her grandparents.”

Mentioning Lily was enough to rid any tension that had formed, and George moved to sit beside her and listen to her babbling away while Dream tried to encourage her to drink the last of her breakfast. After nearly fifteen minutes of trying, he gave up, letting George take her to give himself a chance to shower and get dressed.

He returned not too long after, and with their plans firmly on organising their wedding he’d settled on wearing sweatpants and an old t-shirt. He didn’t need to look smart or presentable, he just wanted to be comfortable when sitting on the sofa beside George. On top of that, he wanted to be in something that was loose fitting: while he’d managed to somehow become *used* to the sensation of pining after George whenever they put on their act, he had a feeling that planning their wedding was going to make the feelings much worse and much more potent than they had been before.

It didn’t help that when he slunk back downstairs, George was sitting cross-legged on their sofa with Lily in his lap. Her hands were bunched up into little fists, clinging to him tightly, and her eyes were wet and watery.

“Everything alright?” Dream asked, announcing his presence as he grabbed his laptop from where it had been charging overnight and moved to their side.

“I tried to put her down to play and she was *not* having it.” George laughed. “She must be teething. She didn’t finish her breakfast, and she *always* finishes her breakfast, so I think something’s making her a bit grumpy.”

“Well, cuddles with you always make *me* feel better.” Dream laughed, forcing himself to focus on typing in his password rather than George’s awkward giggle. “We need to book a venue, send in forms, and send out invites. I think that’s the most we’ll need to do for today. We can have the reception here, we’re just inviting close friends and our immediate family, so we’ve got room for it. Saves money, too.”

“Since when were you so frugal.” George raised an eyebrow.

“Well, it’s not a real wedding is it?” He asked. “It’s just for show, save your money for when you *actually* fall in love.”

“Yeah...” George sighed. “Fine. Whatever you say. I don’t mind what we do, then.”

Dream could hear the bite behind George’s words and he swallowed. This was going to be a more difficult line to tread than he first expected it to be. Still, he loaded up Google Maps and searched for venues nearby that could host a wedding, looking into them with George resting his head on his shoulder and commenting what he did or didn’t like about each.

In the end, they booked a venue a little further out of the city, a barn tucked away in a forested area that offered a *DIY* rate and gave them use of the venue for both the wedding and the reception. Sure, it wasn’t *quite* having the reception and party at home, but it did mean they didn’t have to pay for caterers when they could organise it all themselves. It *had* been short notice, getting married in a month, so instead of the Saturday they’d hoped for they ended up booking the venue for the 10th - a Tuesday - which bought them a couple more days to plan.

Lily began to cough a little and George held her close, rubbing a hand up and down her back to try and soothe her while they came up with a list of *who* needed to be invited. First on the list were Dream’s parents, brother, and two sister’s, George’s parents and sister, then their closest friends. Dream wasn’t sure what it was about weddings that made people like this - he was certain he’d seen it in aunts and uncles before - but rather than sticking to the plan of only inviting a few people they broke that rule, too. *Everyone* from the SMP was invited, even if they were certain they wouldn’t be able to make it. They supposed it was more of a gesture than anything else - that was what they told themselves when they added *Tommyinnit* to the list, anyway.

When Lily started to kick up more of a fuss, George took her into the kitchen to find the soothing gel they'd bought for her gums and Dream started filling in an online template for the wedding invitations themselves. He'd send out emails to those he could, but he decided to just send one invite in the Discord server and @everyone to get their attention - leaving a smiley face in his wake. He could tell George had pulled his phone out of his pocket in the other room when the man sent every heart emoji possible in response.

By the time George came back into the living room, Dream was scrolling through a florist website, looking at the various packages they offered.

"Well, we have to get lilies." George said, sitting back down (a little closer than before, Dream noted) and Dream nodded.

"Of course. Chrysanthemum's look nice, too. We could get them both white, then pick something else blue or yellow?" Dream offered. "Maybe daffodils?"

"And Gardenias for the table?" George asked, and Dream agreed with ease.

If either of the men had stopped and thought for a moment, they might have realised something *incredibly* important. Neither of them had discussed flowers before - sure they'd sometimes thrown roses at each other during Minecraft videos - but they'd never talked about them like this. They weren't the kind of people to say the name of a flower and know exactly what it was, but they'd done just that. And if they considered that the only reason *they* had that knowledge was because they'd spent some of their time apart quietly learning what different flowers symbolised, then maybe they'd have been able to work out that the other had done the exact same thing.

Except neither of them gave it a second thought, neither of them realised that they were both trying to silently communicate something to the other, both just assumed that their plan to place a secret message in their wedding day was working.

At least when they *did* figure it out, they'd have a funny story to tell Lily when she was older.

###

Lily had spent the afternoon asleep on George's chest, and George made no move to wake her. She was a little warmer than usual, so the two gave her the sleep she needed in case she was starting to come down with a cold. They'd sent out invitations and immediately been bombarded with calls

from both sets of parents, who were insisting on paying for a bigger occasion, on contributing towards a honeymoon, or sending half their gift registry (which, neither man had even *thought* about until their parents mentioned it). In the end, it had been easier to just pass on the email addresses of George's parents to Dream's, and vice versa, and let them organise what they wanted to do without involving them as the middle men. Sure, they might regret it when the time came, but for now it at least gave them room to breathe (and scroll through the dozens of messages they'd received from their friends on discord and Twitter).

When they'd planned all they could bear for the day, George passed the sleeping Lily over to Dream and stood up to stretch, before heading upstairs intending on streaming. Dream fixed the papoose to his chest and tucked Lily in close and tight, letting her continue to sleep comfortably against him whilst giving him his arms back to work on making dinner. After an entire day of planning a wedding with the man he loved - whilst pretending *not* to love him and planting secret messages in the bouquets - cooking seemed like an excellent way of destressing.

When his phone buzzed with the notification that George had gone live, he opened up Twitch and placed his phone on the counter where he could see it: just in time to see George (and chat) call him a simp. He donated \$500 dollars to prove just *how much* of a simp he was, and laughed when he heard George exclaiming that he needed to save his money after booking a venue.

He wasn't sure how long had passed when Lily woke up, though the mince meat had turned a lovely golden-brown in the pan and he'd been getting ready to add the vegetables.

"Hello, sweetheart, welcome back to the world of the awake." He laughed softly, pressing a little kiss to her forehead as he pushed the onions, peppers and carrots into the pan.

Lily didn't laugh. Instead, after two little blubbers, she began to sob. Immediately, Dream turned the heat off the food and dried his hands, looking at her and panicking just a little. Normally if she was hungry, upset, or needed changing, her cries would be much more like screams for attention. This wasn't like that, this was just a soft cry of misery, and the occasional cough spluttered from her lips.

"Oh, Lily, sweetheart, come on..." Dream whispered, undoing the papoose so he could hold her rather than the fabric, and he pressed her tightly to his chest. "You're okay, it's okay, daddy's here. You're safe, everything's okay." He reassured her, continuing to whisper the words over and over as she cried. It made his heart ache, hearing her so helpless like this. She'd been so peaceful when George had her earlier in the day, so to think the comfort he was providing *wasn't enough*...

He forced himself to remember that if she was ill, she would be feeling progressively worse throughout the day, and that was why she was crying more now than she was before. Dream made his way through to the living room once more, searching the crate of toys for something to comfort

her. A giraffe plushie was placed in her hands, only to be immediately discarded on the floor. The same fate was met by a rabbit, a blanket, and even Technoplush. A hand to her forehead confirmed that she was certainly warmer than before, and her coughing sounded more pathetic as time went on.

Sad Lily was one thing: he could *cope* with sad Lily, because normally he could *fix* sad Lily. But poorly Lily... There was nothing he could do to take the cold away from her in that moment, nothing he could do to make her feel better, and he could feel his heart breaking in his chest as he pulled her away from him just enough to see the streams of tears pouring down her cheeks.

“Oh, sweetheart...” He whispered, his own voice shaking just a little as a thumb came to try and wipe away the tears. “Daddy’s here. You’re safe, Lils, I promise you’re safe.”

Realising that there was nothing he could do to stop Lily from crying, he moved back into the kitchen to grab his phone and brought it into her field of vision. George might’ve been busy streaming, but he could at least show her the face cam to provide her *some* comfort.

“Look, there’s your dad, he makes everything better doesn’t he?”

Lily whimpered in response.

“He’s brilliant, he’s *so* perfect Lily. He cares so much about you, and he’d do anything to make you feel better. He gives the best hugs, he has the best laugh, and his smiles just make you feel safe.” Dream said. “Everything’s better when George is here.”

While tears still fell from Lily’s eyes, a hand reached out towards Dream’s phone and she tried to grab at the image of George smiling, and if his heart had any pieces left they would have been shattered. She loved George so much - she *wanted* his comfort - and who was he to deny it? How could he explain to the sick, five month old child in his arms that George was busy? How could he tell her that what he was doing right now was more important than her?

And how could he think, even for a moment, that could be true? George would drop everything for Lily if he had to, and when Lily’s fingers brushed against a cold glass screen rather than the warmth of her father she began to cry harder again. Dream’s mind was made up.

He turned his phone off and cradled Lily close to his chest, not caring about the snot and tears that would stain his shirt, before walking upstairs. He was sure that George would hear the crying

before he opened the door, so he didn't bother to knock before pushing it open and stepping inside. He saw his fiancée turn to look over his shoulder, saw George's face fall as he turned back to pause the game, and Dream quickly crossed the room to join him at his side.

"She won't stop crying." Dream explained. "She's warmer than earlier, the only thing that seemed to calm her down was your stream, I figured she might want some cuddles from her dad."

George nodded, spinning in his chair and leaning over to take Lily from Dream, the little girl immediately launching herself at George's chest.

"Hey, it's alright." George said softly, and Dream watched as his fingers moved through her hair to try and give her a little more comfort. "Dad's here now, I'm not going anywhere. Promise. No more time in England away from you guys, I'm here to stay now."

Dream smiled a little as Lily seemed to calm. George's reassurance served to soothe his own worries too - his mind quickly put to rest as George blamed her clinginess on his recent absence rather than a preference for a parent. He leaned forward a little, resting his own hand on Lily's shoulder and rubbing his thumb up and down over the fabric of her onesie to provide even more touch.

It was then that he noticed it.

He could see George's streamlabs on his screen, and could see what the audience saw. His hand stilled on Lily's shoulder for a moment, his eyes moving to George's urgently.

"How do I look?" He whispered, George just raising an eyebrow.

"Scruffy, covered in baby snot, but you'll do."

His reply came with a laugh, a laugh that mellowed out the worry in his stomach, and it took everything in him to not lean forward and kiss the man. That was twice in a matter of seconds that he'd made everything better without even realising it, and *God* was Dream in love.

"Your face cam is still on." Dream whispered, and it was his turn to laugh when George began to panic.

“Shit-- I paused the game, I didn’t even *think* about the face cam. Dream, I’m so sorry!”

“Don’t be *sorry*.” Dream insisted. “I think this is nice. It could’ve been a huge deal.” He shrugged. “But it’s you, me, and Lily.”

George’s eyes softened at his words, and Dream let himself smile. The whole thing felt unreal, and maybe later when it all properly set in that he’d suddenly revealed his face to the entire Internet he’d panic, but right now everything felt *right*. He was here, by George’s side, consoling their little girl in front of tens of thousands of viewers (and however many millions might already be bearing witness to clips circulating on Twitter and Reddit). This was what he wanted, what he *needed*, and he realised that with his family by his side, nothing else mattered.

“This is what I look like, George’s chat.” He said, fingers still providing Lily with comfort (though her cries were much more muted now as she snuggled against George’s chest), his head turning to face the camera. “Usually covered in a little less snot from a baby though. At least, I try to be.” He chuckled, and for the first time when he let out his little, strained, high pitched laugh he saw exactly what he looked like on George’s streamlabs. He saw the way his eyes squinted and the corners became wrinkled, he could see his smile widening and dimples forming on his cheeks, and he could see George looking at him. If he tried hard enough, he could pretend that the look on George’s face was the same love and adoration that he knew filled his own eyes whenever he looked at the Brit. He could believe that the feelings were mutual, that this happy family that made him feel so complete would be forever.

He had to say something eventually, right? There would come a time where he *couldn’t* stand to watch George go, where he *had* to be selfish and ask him to stay, beg him to love him back... When that day came, it would break him.

“Call him *Clay* in person?” George raised an eyebrow, laughing at a donation that popped up. “I still call him Dream even now, you’d *think* I’d eventually start calling him Clay, but no. He’s Dream.”

“He doesn’t love me enough to call me Clay.” Dream laughed.

“I love you enough to marry you, though.”

“Only for my money.” Dream pointed out, throwing George a smirk.

“Yes, you heard it here first chat, I’m only marrying Dream for his money. I’m emigrating from the UK to America and becoming the legal parent of his child because I want his money.” He rolled his eyes. “You’re such an idiot, Dream. What kind of person would do that?”

And *God*, how that felt like a punch to his stomach, but Dream kept up the facade of banter.

“Sapnap.” He answered without missing a beat, and they both laughed together.

Minecraft had been forgotten, and Dream changed George’s category to *Just Chatting* whilst Lily calmed down and clung to George like a lifeline. The two men sat beside each other - Dream eventually pulling over another chair rather than just squatting beside George - and answered as many questions as they could. No one wanted to ask for a *Happy Birthday* anymore, they wanted to know anything and everything that Dream and George would allow them to know. They wanted to know about their relationship, and what they liked most about each other, and about when they were getting married. Some things they kept to themselves - they didn’t reveal the date of their wedding, but promised that photo’s would be shared - and others they shared freely - Dream listened with his chin in his hands as George told them all how good of a dad he was.

It almost felt real.

When Lily started crying again, this time it was her cry for food, and George took her downstairs to feed whilst Dream ended his stream for him. He sent out a quick tweet on his alt account, explaining that *yes*, the clips were real. *Yes*, he’d accidentally face revealed on George’s stream, and *yes*, he’d do a stream in the next few days on his own Twitch so his viewers could see him live, too. After it all, he took a moment to breathe, before heading back downstairs to finish off dinner. His stomach was rumbling and he imagined that George would feel the same way, it had been a busy day of planning and unexpected surprises, and they’d need their energy to take care of Lily while she was ill.

Dream let George have the last slice of garlic bread, and made sure he had an extra spoonful of bolognese sauce.

#

October passed quickly - as it would when time was split between looking after Lily, planning a wedding, planning a birthday party, *and* trying to find time to stream. It was exhausting, every waking moment felt like it was spent preparing for the next, and they were both thankful that Lily’s

cold passed quickly. By the time she was back to her old chipper self, she'd cut her first tooth, and the timing had surely made the experience worse for her. As Dream watched George play peek-a-boo with her as he tried to organise a cake for his birthday in secret, he couldn't help but smile.

Sapnap arrived on the 30th, coming with gifts, smiles, and hugs. Lily had fallen in love with her uncle the moment she'd seen him, and constantly babbled for him. Sapnap was more than happy to provide cuddles and play games, wanting to solidify his standing as *best uncle* in her eyes. They quickly became partners in crime, with Sapnap eager to teach her how to make the most noise possible (and replace all the batteries in the musical toys that Dream and George had let die after she'd managed to curiously press the buttons on them one too many times). He was an utter agent of chaos when it came to Lily, but neither man could bring themselves to ask him to stop teaching her so many bad habits when her laughter was so infectious.

It was the 31st before Dream's promise of a stream with face cam on his Twitch came to fruition.

While his accidental reveal had been incredibly calm and somewhat anticlimactic, this stream was going to be nothing of the sort. It was Halloween, it was his first face cam stream, and the entire Dream Team was there: excuse him for going a little overboard.

The office was decorated with lots of different Halloween trinkets and spooky decor, and costumes had been purchased for the four of them. They'd considered replicating their MCC skins from the week before - with little Lily filling in for Karl as the Hufflepuff of the team - and Sapnap had come prepared. The three of them looked a little ridiculous in their oversized robes and plastic wands, but Lily looked absolutely adorable tucked up in her scarf. Dream loved how cute it made her look - she was practically swimming in the fabric - and he couldn't wait for the fanart. The art of his face reveal had almost focused more on Lily than on him, and he loved seeing his community so full of his little girl. They loved him almost as much as he did. *Almost*.

It felt odd to turn on a camera when setting up his stream, but he forced himself to take a deep breath and checked the background one last time. Happy with the way everything looked, he hit *go live* and sent out tweets, waiting for the Twitch notification to go out and for people to start piling in.

A thousand, ten thousand, thirty thousand, seventy thousand...

"Alright, I think there's enough of you here." Dream laughed, glancing at his streamlabs. *Enough* meant one hundred and twenty three thousand, nine hundred and twenty seven people. Without anyone beside him, it felt intimidating to have his face on show, so he scooted to the side as he spoke.

“Well, happy Halloween guys. If you somehow *haven’t* seen the clips of my face reveal on George’s stream, hello, this is me. If you *have* seen the clips, I promise I don’t always dress like this. I’m not constantly changing between *Wizardry* and *baby spit*. I own jeans, too.” He chuckled, recognising that his voice was a little higher pitched than normal. His nerves were getting to him, so he glanced to the side and nodded his head. “Speaking of George’s stream, everyone say hello to George! My fiance, my money maker this stream.”

George skidded into frame beside Dream, his chair crashing into Dream’s, and both of them descending into giggles. He already felt more at ease than before.

“But that’s not the only surprise we have for you. You can probably tell from the title and category that we aren’t streaming Minecraft. We thought about playing Five Nights at Freddy’s, but figured that might be a little too scary for some audiences. So, we’re going to play jackbox! You guys are always asking for it, I’m showing you my face, it’s a little bit more chill.” He smiled. “Obviously, jackbox takes more than two people, so will the third player please reveal himself?”

With nothing less than the sound of the door to their office being kicked in (though thankfully, it somehow remained intact), Sapnap appeared. Lily was in his arms, raised high above his head as he made his presence know.

“IT’S THE CIRCLE OF LIFE!” He screamed at the top of his lungs, and George and Dream were both *immediately* in stitches. Lily’s yellow scarf had been wrapped around her head like a mane, and she looked around cluelessly as her parents laughed and her uncle continued to shout.

“AND IT MOVES US ALL!”

“DMCA!” Dream wheezed, bringing a hand to wipe the tears running from his eyes. “Sapnap, don’t give me a strike!”

“THROUGH DESPAIR AND HOPE! THROUGH FAITH AND LOVE!”

While Dream continued to wheeze - having slipped half way down his chair in the process - George elected to join in.

“Til we find our place, on the path unwinding!” He sang, a little quieter than Sapnap’s screaming.

“In the circle!” They sang together, Lily starting to kick her legs as she tried to dance. “The ciiiiircllleeee of life!”

Dream continued to wheeze, Sapnap walked over to squeeze himself onto the chair with George, Lily giggled and waved at the camera as George instructed her to. In that moment, he swore he’d never been happier.

He heard George and Sapnap dishing out headphones from the splitter, and they unmuted in discord. It was going to be utter chaos: they were streaming with Wilbur, Tommy, Tubbo, Phil, and Technoblade. Everything was loud, everything was chaotic, Lily didn’t stop smiling and giggling throughout. Whenever she heard Dream, George, or Sapnap rapping she’d join in with babbles in the background - and Technoblade claimed that her babbling had swayed the vote when Dream *absolutely* crushed him. When they played Quiplash, any answer with *Lily* or *George* in pandered enough to the audience to win their votes - and when answers with *Lily* and *George* went head to head, the Lily answers won by a country mile. When it came to their various pitches for different products, George took Lily and covered her eyes.

The entire stream was filled with laughter from start to finish, and Dream found that he didn’t want it to end. Sure, tomorrow was George’s birthday, and that would be filled with just as much - if not more - love and joy, but today was wonderful. After several hours of games, when they said goodbye to their friends, the group continued to stream for a while longer. George told everyone the story of Lily saying *Gogy*, and Dream argued once more that Gogy wasn’t a real word. George tried, at length, to get her to repeat it, but as had become apparent over the last month it had simply been a stroke of luck with the noises she’d been making.

It didn’t stop the chat being utterly enamoured by her incoherent babbles anyway.

“Hey, Lily, who’s your favourite?” Sapnap asked. “And why is it me?”

“She can’t even say words, Sapnap, and you want her to explain why I’m her favourite?” Dream scoffed.

“I think you’ll find I’m the one currently cuddling her, she’s made her favourite very well known.” George pointed out, and Sapnap shook his head.

“Not true, I’m the cool uncle, I’m better just because I’m here less. That’s how it works.”

“Sure, you can be the favourite.” Dream said, using air quotes as he said *favourite*. “That’s why we name her diapers after you.”

“Speaking of which, I think someone’s going to need changing soon.” George said. “Sapnap, move your fat arse out the way, I need to go sort her out before dinner. Can you guys end the stream without me?”

“Of course, write down what you want ordering in and I’ll phone when we’re done.” Dream told him gently, watching him leave the room and offering Lily a wave as they disappeared, before Sapnap chuckled.

“You’re such a simp.”

“I’m *marrying* him.”

“The ultimate simp move.” Sapnap said, turning to face the camera again. “I think this is goodbye, chat.”

“It’s my stream, let me say goodbye.” Dream said, nudging Sapnap’s shoulder. “You’re such an idiot.”

“It’s why you love me, Dreamie.” Sapnap reminded him, and Dream just shook his head as he said goodbye to his stream and sent a raid to Niki, who looked to be playing on the SMP. Once the camera was off, and Twitch and streamlabs were closed, he let out a sigh and leaned back in his chair. There was a moment of silence before Sapnap spoke up.

“First face cam stream. First planned one, anyway. How’re you feeling?”

“It was okay.” Dream said, his eyes closed as he stretched and yawned. “You guys made it better, I don’t think I’d have been able to do a Minecraft stream, though. Jackbox was perfect. Thank you for suggesting.”

“Well, if I’m supposed to be your best man next week you’d *hope* I could be a good friend to you now, too.”

“You’re always a good friend, Sapnap.” Dream said, opening his eyes and flashing the man a smile. “My best friend. I couldn’t do any of this without you.”

“You could, don’t sell yourself short. But... *Thank you*. I don’t think I said properly when you asked but, thank you. I’m glad you want me by your side on the day.”

“Now who’s the simp?” Dream joked, getting to his feet and giving another yawn. “C’mon, I’m too lazy to cook anything, we’re just ordering in pizza, tell me what you want.”

“Hopefully not another baby.”

“That is *not* happening more than once.” He laughed. “Before long Techno’s gonna show up with a sword and a vendetta.”

“So long as he brings a spicy meat feast too, that’s fine by me.”

The two laughed, and they headed downstairs where Dream found George’s order written on a scrap of paper by the menu for their favourite pizza place. He smiled at the heart scribbled next to his writing, and he phoned in their order before George came back downstairs. Rather than spend the evening getting up over and over again for kids stopping by to trick-or-treat, Dream just popped a bucket of candy at the front door when collecting their pizzas. Their evening was simple: pizza, movies, laughter, and an early night before George’s party the next day.

It was the first time the Dream Team were all physically together, and as Sapnap had begged time and time again on calls in the past, he managed to fall asleep against George. Dream didn’t dare wake them, only taking Lily to her cot and returning back downstairs with blankets to snuggle up to his fiance and best friend.

Everything felt natural, it felt like everything in their lives had always been building towards this moment, and he never wanted this to end. He just hoped, when he and George got married in a little over a week's time, nothing would change. He hoped they could stay like that forever.

Chapter End Notes

shout out to the fact that last time it took me 50 days between september part one & part two, & i promised it'd be less than 50 days for this update

it has been 49 days

t e c h n i c a l l y i didn't lie

thank you to everyone that's been waiting for this, i know you guys really enjoy it so i will keep updating (eventually - maybe it'll only take 48 days this time!), i really do just get so much more joy from writing my adventure fics & so they end up taking much more of a priority, but i will always come back to this. next chapter is george's birthday and a wedding, i can't exactly leave you hanging like that!! if you enjoyed, please consider leaving a kudos or a comment. not to sound like dream (who, if you're reading this, hello), but about 10% of people that read my fics leave a kudos, & 1% leave a comment. it takes no time at all & it's totally free, & you don't even need an account. there's nothing stopping you ;D

see you all in another 7 weeks!

Month Five: November (Part One)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

George - unsurprisingly - was the last to awake. His neck was sore from a night on the sofa but his soul very much warmed. As he got to his feet, stretching his arms above his head and listening to his back cracking satisfyingly, he could hear a gentle humming coming from the kitchen: it wasn't Dream's normal tone but it still sounded nice.

Along with the humming George could hear happy coos - Lily's morning chorus - and he padded through to the kitchen. The wooden floor of the corridor was slippery beneath his sock-covered feet, and he slid the last few paces so he'd appear in the doorway in a way that always made Lily burst out into a fit of giggles. So, when she didn't immediately giggle, he worried, and then his tired mind caught up with the sight before him.

Lily wasn't in her high chair, so she couldn't see him to laugh at him. It also wasn't Dream humming to her.

"Happy birthday George!" Sappnap smiled. "I thought you were gonna be asleep for a little while longer, I haven't even started your breakfast yet."

George's hands came to rub at his eyes as he took in the scene, and Sappnap tilted his arms a little so that Lily could see him while she drank from her bottle.

"Can you say *happy birthday daddy?*" Sappnap prompted, looking down at Lily.

"I'm dad." George pointed out. "Dream's daddy."

"Oh, you don't need to tell *me* that."

"Alright, as my first birthday wish I want you to never *ever* say that again." George said, but he couldn't help the way that his lips curled up into a smile.

"I won't say it until midnight, but I'm sure you'll be saying it by then."

“Sapnap!” George exclaimed. “You shouldn’t be saying that sort of thing around Lily!”

“She saw our entire Jackbox stream yesterday, I think it’s a little late for that.”

Sapnap *had* a point, and as George took a moment to consider it he heard a tiny pop and gasp as the nib of Lily’s bottle left her mouth and she began to coo again. She dropped the bottle entirely - Sapnap catching it before it had a chance to fall onto the ground - and her arms reached out towards George.

“Morning, sweetheart.” George spoke to her softly, offering out a hand so she could latch onto his finger tightly. “Is Uncle Sapnap letting daddy have a shower?”

“Dream’s out.” Sapnap said, and George looked up to him with furrowed, curious brows. “Running some errands. Don’t worry, he’s coming back. He’s not gotten cold feet.”

“They’d have to be *really* cold for him to leave a week before the wedding. Especially since it’s my birthday and we’ve got cake.”

“He took the cake.” Sapnap teased, and when George chuckled softly Lily laughed to mimic him.

“Have you been up long?”

“No.” Sapnap replied, moving the bottle back in front of Lily’s face to encourage her to drink once again. George watched his expression soften when her hands came to rest against his - she really did make *everyone* turn soft. “Just as long as she’s been up. Dream asked me to watch her, said you deserved a lie in. I was going to put her down to play for a while after she’d finished eating so I could make birthday pancakes, but you were impatient and woke up too soon.”

“You get used to waking up early when you’ve got an alarm clock that won’t shut up.” He quipped. “I can take her, you can get breakfast on. I’m sure Dream will want some when he comes back from wherever he’s gone.”

The swap happened seamlessly, with Lily barely even breaking from her bottle as George took her in his arms and Sapnap started going through the cupboards of the kitchen to find a bowl to mix the

pancake batter in. Trusting his friend, George left him to it, and he walked with Lily out onto the little porch in their back garden.

Now that it was November and autumn had well and truly set in, George was feeling much more in his comfort zone with the temperature. Right now it was in the low teens - or if he were talking to Dream, *somewhere in the fifties* - and, sheltered from the rising sun by their home, the bench was in the shade and cooler still. The breeze was gentle, blowing the sleep from his eyes and the aches from his bones, and wafting back the dark locks of hair starting to thicken on Lily's head. As she ate, she kicked her feet, and George smiled at her lovingly.

In just over a week, he'd be married to Dream, and *legally* he could make her his daughter. Legally the little girl in his arms, the little girl that he'd given everything up for on a whim because she'd come into his life and claimed his heart, would be *his little girl*.

"You are the *best* birthday present anyone could ever want." George whispered to her gently. "And I love you, *so* very much. You are going to be *wonderful*, Lily. You're going to be the best little girl there is, and I am so lucky to get to be there through it all."

Lily pulled away from the bottle to let out a quiet burp, wriggling a little in George's arms before going back to drinking hungrily again.

"You don't understand a word I say." He whispered, the index finger of his left hand gently brushing against her cheek. "But I'll say it anyway, and I'll say it every day for the rest of your life. I love you, Lily, no matter who you are or what you want to be. I'll always be there for you, ready to cheer you on or to back you up. Whether you're right or wrong, you're my daughter, and I'm on your side. I promise." He let out a breath, shoulders falling, and he watched her eyes flicker up to him. "I'm not as good with words as daddy is, but I love you, and I hope you'll always remember that."

And with that, the bottle popped away from Lily's mouth again and her hands dropped it entirely as she started to babble away.

"Dadadadadada!" She said, beaming up at George, who looked at the discarded bottle as it rolled beside him and decided that it wasn't worth the fight. There was barely a sip left at the bottom and *someone* was clearly energetic and wanting to play.

"Hello, sweetheart." He smiled, shifting his hold on Lily so that she rested against his shoulder and he could pat her until she burped. She'd grown so much since she'd first come into their lives and now when her chest was against his shoulder, her feet were able to reach his thighs. She could

bounce herself up and down and amuse herself rather than let out any gas she had bubbling away inside her stomach, but George wasn't one to ruin her fun. She'd burp eventually if they stayed like this long enough, and she was clearly engaged.

"What can you see, Lily?" George asked, turning his head to look in the same direction as her. "Can you see a flower pot? There's some flowers growing there." He nodded in the general direction of the flowers, and Lily jostled against him.

"Papapapa!" She squealed, and George looked around to see *what* that could mean.

It was only when his eyes settled on Patches - the cat in question prowling towards them - that he put two and two together.

"Papapa!" Lily repeated when Patches jumped onto the bench, curling up beside them.

"Patches." George told her, one hand moving to stroke the fur behind Patches' ears. "Say *hello Patches!*"

"Papapapapa!" Lily said, still bouncing, only stopping to burp once, before immediately starting up again with both her movements and her babbling.

"Don't tell daddy, but I think you've inherited my brains." George said, hearing a scoff coming from the door that led to the porch.

"I thought she wasn't yours. How'd she inherit them? Osmosis or some shit?" Sapnap asked, holding two plates of pancakes drizzled in syrup for them both.

"Magic." George shrugged. "Wanna play in the grass Lily?" He asked, getting to his feet and taking the three strides it took to reach the edge of the wooden platform. Lily was still in her pyjamas, but they needed a wash anyway, so George didn't think twice as he lowered her onto the ground: a few grass stains weren't the end of the world if she had fun whilst they ate breakfast. He placed her on her back - so she'd have the sky and clouds above to look at - though he doubted she'd stay that way for long. Rather than go back to the bench, George elected to sit on the step so he could react faster when Lily inevitably tried to shove a handful of grass and dirt in her mouth. Sapnap joined him, and Patches followed too. She elected to lay in the sun, and made herself a target for the baby that was *desperate* to get on the move.

With plates of pancakes in both their hands, the two men started to eat, and Sapnap was the first to speak.

“So, I know we’re all best friends, but I feel like I wouldn’t be doing my best man duty if I didn’t do this.” He began to explain, George turning his head with his mouth full and nodding to prompt him to continue.

“Why are you marrying Dream? Because clearly, he loves you, so I just wanna make sure that you love him too.”

“Sap--” George began, and the younger just held up a hand.

“I’m not saying you don’t, I’m just saying I’m pretty sure that one of the *many* responsibilities of a best man is to make sure that he’s marrying someone that loves him back. And I mean, *I* can see that you love him, everyone in the world can see that you love him, but I wanna hear it from you. Why do *you* love Dream?”

George took another bite of pancakes, chewing slowly to give himself extra time to think. Not because he needed time to think of a reason - he had a hundred reasons to hand every waking hour of the day, and each time he glanced at Dream he was given at least another three.

He needed time to think so that he could prepare himself.

“I love Dream because...” He began slowly, taking in a breath and focusing his gaze on Lily. “Because he’s Dream.” He shrugged, as if it were obvious. “Because he’s kind, and thoughtful, and caring and beautiful and *perfect*. I thought I loved him before I came out here, y’know? I thought the part of Dream I saw online and in our calls was all of him, and that was already enough for me, but now? Visiting Florida in July was the best thing I’ve ever done. It meant that I got to see *all of him*. I didn’t see the personality he put on for the fans, or the select bits of life he thought were worth sharing with us, I got to see everything. I got to see his clean kitchen but messy bedroom, I got to see how he did his laundry and went grocery shopping, how he drove to pick up takeout. I got to see every little piece of him, everything that I’d missed before, I got to build up the picture of him and realise that somehow that perfect person I was in love with was a person. A person I could touch and reach out and *love*. And now... I have that. I have him.”

Except he didn’t.

He still hadn't told him.

Because between planning a wedding, looking after a baby (and for a time, a sick, *teething* baby), and their jobs, he'd never had a moment to spare to tell Dream the truth.

He'd poured his heart out to Sapnap, he'd been reassured by Ponk, but Dream still didn't know how he truly felt.

"Good." Sapnap said, a hand coming to rest on his shoulder. "I'm happy for you guys, I really am. Even *if* you didn't tell me about you two dating until you were engaged. Probably for the best, I do *not* want to have seen you two in a private discord call and assumed--"

"Sapnap!" George choked, half way through swallowing a mouthful of pancake, and the man was immediately in stitches. Lily - who'd been slowly rolling herself from back to front on the grass - looked over to them and giggled along, clueless to what was happening but smiling brightly and radiating out as much joy as she could sense coming from the pair.

The three spent their morning in the back garden together. When George and Sapnap had both finished eating, Sapnap had taken the plates to the dishwasher, and the three only headed back into the house when Lily needed changing - which Sapnap even offered to do. George was being spoiled rotten for his birthday before he'd even gotten any presents - before he'd even seen his fiancée - and he found himself wondering when Dream was going to return at around quarter to eleven.

He was almost impressed at his intuition when, five minutes later, the sound of Lily's frustrated grunts as she tried to crawl toward Patches were covered up by the sound of a door opening and footsteps approaching.

"Home!" Dream called, and George could hear the smile on his face. He *loved* hearing that tone from Dream. "George, can you come help me with something?"

"Something?" George asked, pushing himself up to his feet and leaving Sapnap to watch Lily's attempts of movement. He had no idea what the *something* was, his mind assuming that it would be some kind of birthday present that was too heavy for him to carry alone - a gift far too extravagant for George to really deserve - but when he stepped out of the living room and into the corridor that led to the front door, he saw exactly what Dream needed *help* with.

In a way, it *was* a birthday present, and it *was* extravagant, and George swore he'd never smiled quite so widely in his life as his feet carried him quickly toward the front door. Dream stepped aside, gesturing his head to the two slightly shorter adults behind him.

"International shipping." He said. "Just got in this morning."

"Mum! Dad!" George beamed, his arms wide as he enveloped them into tight hugs.

He knew they were coming to the wedding, but he hadn't expected them for another week. Having them there on his birthday was just the icing on top of an already *very* good cake.

"Lunch is on me." George could hear Dream say faintly, his mind too full of thoughts of his parents to think about what he was saying too hard. "This afternoon we can get you checked in at your hotel, your luggage can stay in my car until then. If you want to meet Lily before heading out-"

And *that* was what broke the hug. George didn't pull away, but his mother did, and the strange warmth that filled his stomach made him smile a little bit wider as he heard her walking into the living room. As his father took a moment to hold him close he could hear his mother cooing over Lily, and in that moment everything felt perfect.

He had his family, both old and new. It was going to be, without doubt, the best birthday ever.

###

Dream had been antsy when the four weren't gone until after one, but the moment they'd set off (with Lily in her grandmother's arms) he'd sent out texts to everyone that was helping. Most of the decorations were in the trunk of Sapnap's car - hidden from George's sight - but Dream's parents were bringing the cake and the gifts that were too big for Dream to hide anywhere else, and the friends that *could* make it to Orlando before the wedding could finally leave whatever cafe in the city they'd been hiding in for the last few hours to join.

So they started to decorate, hanging banners, bunting, and streamers. Sapnap was on balloon duty, Dream's siblings helping to lay out the food that his parents had made, while Dream himself was in the kitchen with Bad and his mother.

“So...” Dream looked up from the instructions on the back of the pizza box - making sure he was cooking it correctly. His mother was trying to change the subject, and with a wedding just over a week away Dream almost feared what she could possibly talk about. Would it be his suit? The flowers? The venue?

“Yeah, mom?” Dream asked, prompting her to go on while she busied herself with... Nothing. She was simply *trying* to look busy, and it amused Dream.

“Do you have your passport? And George’s?” She asked, and Dream hummed to himself. If he was honest, he’d expected her to beat around the bush for a little while longer.

“Our passports?” He asked. “Yeah, I have them. They’re in our bedroom.”

“Oh, wonderful.” She smiled. “Do you mind if I take a look? I need the numbers on them.”

“What for...?” Dream asked hesitantly, lowering the pizza box and glancing at Bad for a moment - trying to silently ask him if he knew *why* his mother was asking - before he let himself look at her.

“Well, you and George *said* you hadn’t planned a honeymoon and you *did* give us the email addresses of George’s parents--”

“Mom!” Dream exclaimed. “You didn’t?!”

“We did!” She replied hastily. “And it’s all organised. They’re staying with us after the wedding, we’re going to look after Lily for the week. You boys have been so busy looking after her that you haven’t had time for yourselves in months, and it’s your wedding! you only get one: you *deserve* a honeymoon. It’s nothing too extravagant, we couldn’t do much with such short notice, but everything’s booked and paid for. Flights, accommodation, a car rental. Don’t tell George yet, but we put about twelve-thousand Cuban Pesos in your wedding card.”

“Mom! How much *is* that?!” Dream said. “Mom, I can’t take all that money from you, we can afford it--”

“It’s five hundred dollars. Clay, it’s *fine*. It’s your wedding, and I’m your mother, was I supposed to *not* spoil you?”

“Not that much, mom, let me repay some of that--”

“Not a chance.” His mother smiled. “So, where are the passports?”

Disgruntled, Dream told her exactly which drawer they were in, and she disappeared from the room with a grin on her face. She knew she’d won, and when Dream looked to Bad again the man simply shrugged.

“I had *nothing* to do with it. I didn’t get the two of you anything even close to a honeymoon.”

“Good.” Dream said. “One is going to be *plenty*.”

The conversation faded back to *normal* things, and the rest of the decorating and preparation was done quickly. By three, everything was finished, and almost everyone that was coming was already there. For the second time that day, Dream left in his car, only to return forty-five minutes later with his last gift for George.

Did it *really* count as a gift if they’d already discussed getting it together? It wasn’t like he’d gone out on a whim and made a huge financial decision without George’s opinion - though he did feel a little cruel knowing that the poor thing was going to have to be put in a kennel so soon after joining the family. But he wouldn’t put his parents in charge of a baby, a cat, *and* a new puppy for a week, even if it *was* their choice to book the honeymoon.

By four, their home was full. Music was playing quietly as people sat around and spoke, all waiting for the call from Dream.

It was half past four when Dream got the text from George to say that they were coming home, and twenty minutes later everyone had gone out into the garden as George and his parents walked to the front door of the house - a sleeping Lily in her grandfather’s arms. It was a surprise party but with a new puppy and a baby there was going to be no jumping out from behind the sofa to surprise George for fear of something (or someone) being frightened by it.

“Dream?” George called when he stepped through the front door, and Dream sat where he was in the living room, saying nothing. “You decorated all this yourself?” George continued to speak, knowing Dream could hear him and was only choosing not to reply.

Still, when he stepped through the doorway into the living room, George saw his eyes widen and another smile burst its way onto his face.

Dream decided then, privately, that today might have been one of his favourite days of his life so far. Seeing George smile so much, *knowing* that he was the cause of most of it, made him smile too.

“You got--”

“I did.” He said, the puppy on his lap barking at the new person he saw.

“But you said they’d all gone!”

“I lied.” Dream smirked. “I paid extra so they’d keep him a few more days. I wanted to surprise you.”

The puppy barked again, and Dream looked at George with nothing but love in his eyes. Sure, their parents were visiting, the garden was full of friends, they *had* to keep the act up, but Dream let himself forget that it was acting. For the afternoon he’d let himself think it was real, let himself ignore the way his stomach twisted and churned whenever he made eye contact with George and just *enjoy it*. They were getting married, after all, he might as well indulge in the love he felt for the man.

Maybe one day it would end up with his heart breaking, but it was a price worth paying for the happiness he felt now.

George was a damn good actor though, because the look that Dream was sure he was giving the man was returned with ease. The wide grin had softened, his eyes looked at Dream with such a gentle yet determined love, and the older took long strides across the living room until he was kneeling down beside the armchair that Dream sat on and pressing a kiss to his lips. Dream could feel George’s hands finding his cheeks, cupping them, fingers brushing over them with tender care. The kiss didn’t deepen, but it did linger, and Dream melted with every second that passed.

He loved kissing George. He loved the way that George made him feel, and the way that he made George feel. It was all an act and would come to an end one day, but Dream kissed back with fervour and moved his hands from the puppy on his lap to his shoulders, his fingers skimming

carefully over fabric and his eyes fluttering shut to enjoy the moment. God only knew how many he'd get, and he was going to cherish each and every one of them.

In the end, they were broken apart by the puppy jumping skittishly on Dream's lap, and the two pulled away slowly. George's hands didn't leave Dream's cheeks, and his didn't leave George's shoulders. Neither wanted to let go of the other.

Maybe... Maybe a honeymoon *wouldn't* be such a bad idea after all.

"There's one more surprise." Dream whispered. "Well, more than that, you've got all your presents to open too, but there's one more *big surprise*."

He said no more as he got to his feet, watching as the puppy began to explore his new surroundings, before joining their hands together between them and guiding George (followed closely by his parents) through to their garden.

On top of everything else that he'd already been given that day, George began to cry when he saw everyone waiting for them. Dream's family had all come out to surprise him - his parents, brother, and sisters - and so had a half dozen of their friends: Bad, Antfrost, Sapnap, Wilbur, Eret and Karl had all managed to make their way to the state early. Dream had held him close when he'd let out a sob, and the pair had shared tearful kisses as George muttered a dozen different thank yous.

Music was played, presents were opened, food was eaten and laughter was shared. The afternoon turned to evening and then into night and the party continued. The grandparents fought over putting Lily to bed (and eventually, all four of them went upstairs together), leaving the eight friends sitting around together in the dimly lit garden, finishing off the cake and barbeque food that Dream's siblings hadn't taken home with them.

"Thank you." George said quietly, voice barely reaching Dream's ears but attracting just enough of his attention for him to turn his head.

"It's your birthday, your first birthday away from home, and we're getting married next week, of *course* I was going to go all out. I wanted to make you feel special."

George opened his mouth to say something - Dream could see in his eyes that he wanted to say something - but instead of words, he just let out a gentle, contented sigh, and rested his head on Dream's shoulder instead. The younger wound an arm around him, squeezing him close and

pressing a kiss against his hair.

“I love you, George.” Dream whispered gently. It was the truth, it was said quietly enough that only George could hear - it wasn’t to keep up an act or to fool their friends into believing that this was all for love to make getting that visa a little bit easier - it was a confession.

He had no idea if George took it as such as the Brit in question nestled further into Dream’s side, but he wasn’t going to push. This was his birthday, and birthday’s weren’t for pushing too far.

#

Nine days - and a completely normal Presidential election - later, George and Dream were standing in two separate rooms of the barn they’d booked for their wedding. They were separated by a wall, and the meters between them felt like miles. They hadn’t seen each other since the night before - Dream spending the night with his parents and George at home alone - and even *if* it was tradition, they’d both come to the conclusion that they didn’t like tradition all that much. Lily was currently with her Uncles, leaving the two grooms to get ready with their parents and best men. Sapnap was with Dream, Ponk was with George, and they were both having *very* similar conversations.

“You sure you’re ready to do this?” Sapnap asked.

“If you felt it was too soon, you could back out.” Ponk reminded him.

“I’m ready.” Dream replied.

“I don’t want to back out.” George said.

“He loves you.” Sapnap smiled.

“He loves you.” Ponk grinned.

“I know.” The grooms said, their cheeks turning a light shade of pink. “I love him too.”

“And if anything ever goes wrong, you’ve got so many people in your corner.” Sapnap said.

“I’ll be on a plane to America as fast as I can.” Ponk told George. “Whatever happens, you’re my best mate.”

“I’m here for you.” Sapnap added.

“Thank you.” The grooms both said, smiling at their best men with a mixture of love and nerves in their eyes. There was no going back from this. “But there’s nothing I need to worry about. If anything goes wrong--”

“--With Dream--”

“--With George--”

“-- We’ll fix it together.” They finished. “I love him. We’ve got each other. Everything will be okay.”

Their parents fussed over them next, straightening collars and ties, wiping dirt from cheeks with spit on their thumbs, shedding tears of pride and happiness as they looked at their sons - all grown up - and embraced them.

When a knock came on each of their doors - Technoblade on Dream’s and Phil on George’s - the parents left the rooms they’d gotten ready in, fussed over their daughters in the dresses, and made their way to sit at the front of the room set up for the ceremony. The *DIY* package meant they’d spent much of the day before setting everything up by hand, but everyone had pitched in. It was minimal, but beautiful, and it was *them*. And, *yes*, the cake that had been created for their wedding *was* a to-scale replica of L’Manburg in its prime.

They were getting married, not growing up.

Dozens of their friends were now there. Almost everyone that they’d interacted and worked with online had made it (although some of the younger members of the server and the younger competitors from *MCC* were busy with school, but they’d have plenty of photos to share with the friends that couldn’t come). The room was full of people that loved them, people that were *happy* for them, and they couldn’t wait any longer.

They didn't have to, thankfully. They stepped out of their rooms - Ponk and Sapnap standing between them so they still couldn't quite see each other - and Technoblade stood before the four with Lily cradled in his arms.

Lily looked absolutely beautiful, both of her father's decided. It must have been the work of Niki (who Lily had immediately fallen in love with upon meeting) to get her into the dress and tights, and the little flower headband that she wore had been a gift from Wilbur. Technoblade looked dapper in his suit, and with Lily against his chest in one arm (with Technoplush in her hand - something that warmed his heart far more than he cared to tell anyone else) he held the basket of petals for her - or more likely him - to toss in the other. Beside them both stood Dream and George's sisters, in matching dresses to Lily, with bouquets of flowers in their hands. They had a mixture of lilies, daffodils, and chrysanthemums in them, and the ribbons the girls wore around their waists and in their hair were a bright yellow that matched perfectly with the daffodils they held.

"Ready?" Technoblade asked them everyone, waiting until both men replied with a nod before he started to walk, the grooms' sisters following close behind.

Dream and George both craned their necks to see through the door and down the aisle to watch as Lily and Technoblade threw the fake petals onto the ground. There were plenty of *awws* from the crowd - and sniffles from Lily's grandparents - as the pair made their way down the aisle together. Music played, cameras flashed, people clapped and cheered when Lily cooed and shifted in Technoblade's arms to show him Technoplush and point out that *it was him* for the seventh time since she'd met him, but eventually they made it to the altar. The three girls peeled off to the side to stand beside their parents, and everyone looked back down the aisle, waiting for George and Dream to appear.

No turning back now. At least, not without all of their friends and family staring at them.

George, Ponk, Sapnap and Dream walked up the aisle together. Dream and George still couldn't see each other just yet, but they both wore smart suits with flowers pinned to their lapels. Dream's, naturally, were green, and George's were blue. He wore cornflowers, and Dream wore a carnation.

They didn't see each other until they reached the head of the aisle and the two best men turned to face their friends, giving them one last embrace, before stepping away and revealing the grooms to each other.

Both of them smiled widely, tears filled their eyes, and George let out a laugh when Dream was the first to wipe the tears from his face.

For the two of them, the ceremony was a blur until they arrived at their vows. Not just because their eyes were filled with so many tears that they could barely see, but because they only had eyes for each other. Sure, dozens of their friends surrounded them, their parents were there, their *daughter* was there (now on Phil's lap, playing with Technoplush), but today was their day.

Even if they hadn't had a chance to *seriously* talk about it, even if they hadn't had the chance to truthfully, honestly, and bluntly confess their feelings for each other, it was still *their day*.

Dream was asked to give his vows first, and he swallowed back a sob and wiped away even more tears before he started, reaching into his pocket with shaky hands to pull out the thrice written speech.

He wanted to get through this without breaking down entirely.

"I love you, George." He laughed, sniffing again almost immediately and shaking his head. "I remember when I was a kid, I never thought I'd find one that I could really *love*. I mean, I went to online school, all my friendships were made over the Internet. I didn't think that I'd ever really be capable of this sort of love, unconditional, where you wake up beside each other every day and you see each other not just at your highs, but your lows. You've seen so many of my lows, George, and you stand by me. I've seen yours and I wouldn't leave your side even if you tried to get rid of me. You are... You are *handsome*, you are *smart*, you are *kind*, you are so full of love and humour and everything you do shows me a part of myself I didn't know I had, while giving that part of me its perfect match in you. You taught me what it means to be in love, George, and I don't think I'd ever have discovered that without you."

Tears were running thick and fast down his cheeks by then, and he let out a quiet giggle when he heard Lily starting to babble *dada* over and over again, as if she was concerned by his crying.

"I can't read the rest." He admitted. "Can't see. But I love you, George, and I will forever. Whatever happens, I'll support you, I'll care for you, and I'll love you. And I can't wait to see what tomorrow brings."

With Lily's *dada*'s only getting louder and more impatient, Dream raised a finger as if to pause the ceremony before quickly stepping away from the altar and taking the little girl from Phil. Immediately Lily quietened, and everyone in the audience let out a soft laugh when he stepped back in front of George with her in his arms.

She *was* the reason they were getting married, it was only fair that the little girl that had brought them together like this was there, in their arms, when they were wed.

Next, it was George's turn to speak his vows, and he reached into his pocket. Instead of pulling out a piece of paper with a speech written on it he pulled out a pair of glasses - his enchroma glasses - and he held them out for everyone to see. Lily was intrigued - going so far as to let go of Technoplush and trying to lean out of Dream's hold to reach for them - but she was unsuccessful in her quest.

"These glasses meant I got to see colours for the first time." George said. "We did a video in Minecraft together, and you were the first thing I saw through the glasses. It was strange when I got to see you in person and put them on because nothing really changed. It wasn't like the world around me exploded into a rainbow, it wasn't like I suddenly saw an entirely different spectrum than I had done for the rest of my life, I just saw you." He said, swallowing as he tucked them back into his pocket. "And I think that's because you were always in full colour for me, Dream." He paused. "Should I call you Clay today?" He asked - and the laughter from their friends that filled the room made his heart beat a little faster. "Just because I couldn't see red didn't mean I couldn't see how much you meant to me, just because green is outside my vision didn't mean I couldn't recognise how *stupidly* pretty your eyes are. You're more than just the colours on your clothes, or the blond of your hair, or your god awful shoes. You're Dream, you're impossibly kind, hardworking, caring... You love everyone, you want to do so much *good* in this world, you took in a young girl that was abandoned on your doorstep because you're a good person and now look at us. Family."

George blinked, tears fell, and the two men looked at each other with love in their eyes.

This was as real as it got. If they had any ability to think between them they would have realised by now that what they felt and said was real, but neither of them could. They were both too enamoured with each other to think for even a second that it was real.

"We'll be a family, the three of us, forever. I love you with all of my heart Dream, *and you Lily.*" George emphasised, their daughter squealing at the mention of her name. "I can't picture myself ever being without you again. I never want to do that. I'll do everything in my power to make sure that if anything ever goes wrong we fix it together, we're there for our daughter, and we spend the rest of our days growing old and happy together."

By then, there was no doubt that everyone had been moved to some form of tears. While their parents had been crying on-and-off for most of the day their friends had now joined them. Velvet and Ant were sat together, holding hands tightly and leaning their heads against each other. Technoblade, Wilbur and Phil were all puffy eyed. Niki had been sobbing quietly for some time, with one of Fundy's arms around her as he too cried. Eret had teared up, even the likes of Schlatt dared to show emotion - though any evidence was hastily hidden with the wipe of his cheeks.

Everyone was happy for them.

Rings were exchanged, slipped onto fingers with only *alittle* difficulty from the fidgety child in Dream's arms, but neither man would have it any other way.

"If anyone objects to this union, speak now or forever hold your peace."

The only sound was the contented babbles of Lily, who had tired of Dream and now wanted to shift into George's arms. The handover happened quietly and quickly, with Lily snuggling against his chest and closing her eyes, oblivious to the situation around her.

"I now declare you partners in life. Gentlemen, you may now kiss."

And so, before the watchful eyes of their friends and their family, the two occluded the distance between them, closed their eyes, and kissed.

Despite the dozens of eyes on them, and the infant gradually falling asleep in George's arms, it was possibly the best kiss that Dream had ever had in his life. It wasn't a particularly deep kiss, nor was it too sensual, but it wasn't *soft*. It was a kiss that held so much in it - so many unspoken words, so many unrevealed feelings. It was a kiss that held the future - *their future* - a kiss that told the story of the life they'd shared so far and the life still ahead of them. It contained the memories they'd already made, and the promise of decades more memories to come.

It wasn't the sort of kiss that friends shared when they married each other to ensure one could permanently move to another country and they could raise a family together.

It wasn't the sort of kiss that friends shared as a favour.

It was full of sparks, of heat, of desire and love and trust. Everything that they weren't brave enough to say was exchanged, whispered wordlessly through dancing lips and swiping tongues.

And when they pulled back and looked at each other, Dream's hands protectively and lovingly caressing George's cheeks, their eyes finished that conversation.

But neither of them had said a thing.

They were husbands, and neither of them was *certain* that the other loved them back.

Neither let it put a dampener on the mood, and after the ceremony was done they shared a meal with those they loved the most. It felt like George's birthday all over again - with drinks, food, music and laughter. The guests seemed to play pass the parcel with Lily, all wanting a turn with cuddling her and wanting to be the one that she fell asleep on (a game that was, *of course*, won by none other than Phil - though Wilbur would maintain she only didn't fall asleep on him because she was too interested in his glasses).

A few speeches were made, and informal photographs were taken out on the paved patio when the sun began to set. While George, Dream, and Lily had been photographed by the friends that were more adept with a camera, the rest had stayed behind to push tables to the side.

When they returned to the barn the lights had been turned down low, people stood to the side of the room nursing their drinks, and the song that they'd settled on together began to play.

Dream's mother took Lily into her arms and he held out a hand for George - for his husband - who took it dutifully with a tired, loving smile making its way onto his face.

Neither man was a dancer, though Dream was the more coordinated of the pair and he became the de facto leader of the dance. As the lyrics began, the two moved back and forth, managing to keep time with the music and just enjoying the closeness they shared rather than focusing on pulling some incredible, overly rehearsed dance routine from nowhere.

The day had been long, the two were just happy to share a quiet moment in each other's arms.

"Paradise is wherever your people are; you're alive with the people you love."

"Well?" Dream whispered softly, his words too quiet for anyone but George to hear over the music. "What do you think? Paradise?"

George giggled - he'd had enough to drink that *giggling* seemed to be his go-to response to

everything - and he tilted his head so he could look up to Dream. When they stood together like this their difference in stature was all too clear, but Dream's chin could tuck neatly on George's head, and his head perfectly against Dream's chest. Neither man could complain when they fit together like that.

"I think I could call this paradise." George hummed softly, his arms moving to wrap behind Dream's neck so he could pull himself up onto the tips of his toes and reach Dream's lips - pressing a little bit deeper into the kiss while Dream continued to slowly sway their bodies to the music.

As their friends joined them on the dance floor - with those that were partners, or had brought partners with them dancing along to their song - they relaxed further into each other's embrace. No longer were all eyes on them, and they were free to just be themselves. It was still their wedding, of course, and they still had to keep the act up, but as the night continued on and their parents left to take Lily to bed (and sleep themselves) the unasked question became more and more pressing, yet remained entirely unanswered.

At what point now did they *stop* pretending? When they were only left with their closest friends? When they returned to their hotel room?

It was a question that only they would know the answer to. No one else needed to know what they did behind closed doors.

Chapter End Notes

what the-- A BABY FIC UPDATE IN LESS THAN 7 WEEKS?! IS THAT EVEN LEGAL?!

hope you enjoyed :]

Month Five: November (Part Two)

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

“You’re *sure* you have everything you need?” George asked. “We’ve still got time to nip to Walmart and buy more diapers, we can get more formula or some spare clothes in case she vomits and you need them--”

“George, *honey*, stop stressing.” His mother said, her eyes following his and Dream’s as George’s father, and Dream’s parents walked into the other room with Lily in their arms. “Both of you, stop stressing, she’s fine. You’ve been married less than twenty four hours so just *relax*. You’ve got to be in Miami by three for your flight. Stop worrying about us and go. If anything happens - if she starts talking or crawling - we’ll make sure it’s all on video. We raised the two of you between the four of us, we can take care of Lily for a week.”

“Alright mum.” George said, letting his shoulders fall as a breath left his lips. “If anything happens, call us.”

“Nope, you’re not hearing from any of us until you’re back in the US, unless there’s a *complete* disaster. And the same goes for you. If you can, turn your phones off when you get on the plane and don’t turn them back on. This is your chance to celebrate your marriage.”

George could feel Dream looking at him and he strained to smile, nodding for his mother and opening his arms up to offer her a hug.

“Alright.” He said, his mother instinctively moving forward. He felt her arms wrapping tightly around him and he eased a little more. “I love you, mum. Thank you for all this, for everything.”

“I love you too.” She said, giving another squeeze and pressing a kiss to his cheek. “My baby boy, *all grown up*.”

“I’ll bring him back in one piece.” George heard Dream joke, and he felt his mother pulling back from him to instead look at the taller man that stood beside them both.

“I know you will, Clay. Come here.” She stepped away from George and brought her arms tightly around her son-in-law instead. “You’re family now, I want *you* back in one piece too. Lily will be fine with us for a week, but she’ll want her dad’s back before much longer. And Cleo and Patches

will miss you, too.” Dream looked to George, his chin on top of his mother’s head, and George quietly chuckled to himself.

“We’ll send postcards.” Dream said eventually as George’s mother stepped back, and George watched him grab his car keys from his pocket. “Come on Georgie, if we get to the airport early enough we can have a romantic duty-free lunch.”

“He’s a keeper, George.” His mother turned to him and he turned bright red at the statement, before Dream’s hand found his. It seemed to be Dream’s way of encouraging the conversation to end, tugging lightly, and his mother understood. “Safe drive, boys. Text us when you’re at the airport.”

“Yes mum.” George said, taking a step toward Dream and resting his head against the taller man’s shoulder. “We’ll be back soon.”

The goodbyes lasted a few more minutes before Dream and George managed to get out the door, and Dream’s arm moved around George’s shoulders to tug him closer as they walked down the steps on the porch.

“So,” Dream began. “Our honeymoon?”

“A week in Havana, everything paid for, I almost feel bad, we aren’t *actually* married and they still paid for it.” George missed the way Dream flinched at his words. “I mean, I suppose everyone else thinks we’re actually married, in the eyes of the law we are, but in reality we both know it’s not real.”

“Yeah.” Dream said, his arm moving back to his side quickly enough for George to notice it, but not so quickly that he questioned it.

The two walked down the sidewalk to where Dream had parked the car before climbing inside. Dream turned the key in the ignition, George pulled up his phone and started scrolling through Spotify for something to play, and Dream put the car in drive. He pulled away from the kerb and accelerated, and the long, three and a half hour drive began. The journey, once off the quiet roads of the suburbs that Dream’s parents lived in, was fast - taking the Turnpike south - and full of laughter and singing. Every song that came on was sung at the tops of their lungs, the windows were down and the sun was shining, it was *perfect*. The perfect day to start what should be the holiday of their lives.

The flight was easy - not too long and with little turbulence - and before five the plane touched down on Cuban soil. They went through the usual motions at the airport - border control, baggage claim, and a car rental. By six they were out on the roads, and a little after seven George had managed to navigate Dream to the hotel that their parents had booked for them. Not only was it out of the city, it was right by the beach. The staff checked them in and, after a few knowing looks when they had a double rather than a twin, they were finally in their room.

As desperate as they were to just collapse into bed and sleep after a day of travelling, Dream insisted on them getting dinner. The two didn't change, keeping on the same casual clothes they'd travelled in, and when they made it to the restaurant it became apparent just how hungry they both were.

Despite being out of the country, both Dream and George seemed to have the same mindset: this was their honeymoon and they should act like it. At the table, George noticed that Dream was quick to hold his hand and play with his fingers, fiddling with the rings and looking at them closely whenever he spoke. George took time to appreciate just how beautiful Dream looked as the sun set behind him, and he couldn't help the smile on his face whenever they made eye contact.

He wished it were real. He wished, when he covered his face in sauce and Dream leaned over to wipe his lips with the inside of his thumb, it was real. He wished, when Dream ordered for him because he knew *exactly* what George wanted, it was love. He wished that he'd taken Ponk's advice and told Dream sooner, because before the wedding he'd been able to believe that his feelings were requited, but now he found himself struggling a little more. Sure, *he* hadn't said anything, but if Dream liked him then wouldn't he have mentioned it by now? Dream wasn't the sort of person to do things by halves.

Surely he wasn't the sort of person that would have been able to go through with an entire fake wedding without saying something if he felt *something* real. Dream was too kind, he wouldn't be able to trap someone in a loveless marriage, even if it *was* for a child.

Right?

It didn't feel unrequited when they changed into their pyjamas and slipped into bed - when Dream held up the blanket for George to crawl underneath and placed it gently over him. It didn't *feel* unrequited when Dream threw an arm around George's waist and pulled him close, and it certainly didn't feel unrequited when Dream's hot breath hit the back of his neck, lips tickling his skin as he whispered goodnight.

But it was. George forced himself to remember that it *was*. This was for Lily, not for them.

He barely slept that night.

When they awoke to another day in paradise - clear blue skies and a somehow even bluer ocean - it began lazily. A late breakfast, cocktails, the perfect start to a honeymoon whether it was real or not. They had a week together in this beautiful part of the world and they planned on making the most of it. Dream seemed to have an adventure in mind for every day of the week and today was no different. He'd raised it over breakfast, and George had smiled broadly in response.

"It's a two hour drive but it's supposed to be the best spot for snorkelling." He had explained as George took a bite of his bread. *"There're so many fish, they're beautiful!"* He said, and George had laughed a little.

"I'm still colourblind in Cuba, that didn't change when we got on the plane!"

"It's still beautiful!"

And so as the sun kissed the sky and heat beat down on the sands of Cuba, the two found themselves pulling on masks and snorkels and preparing for a dip in the ocean. Dream knew that George couldn't appreciate the beauty to the same extent as him - though he was certain that even without being able to observe a full spectrum of colour their surroundings still took his breath away. The ocean here was so much *bluer* than it was on the North coast of the country, and the sky was too. It seemed impossible that the colours could be any richer than they were here, but Dream was certain that the island would prove him wrong again.

With swimming trunks and flippers worn the two couldn't help but giggle softly at the sight of each other. Dream didn't think he looked *as* ridiculous as George, but then he was taller, the flippers weren't as obscenely long compared to his feet.

"You look like an idiot." George said, and Dream smiled a little more brightly at the affection in his tone.

"So do you." Dream replied, and his giggling became a full belly laugh when George just poked his tongue out at him in return. Rather than make yet another jibe, Dream held out his hand, his wedding ring catching in the sunlight and making his stomach somersault. Maybe before the trip was up he'd be able to put those feelings to rest. He'd confessed to George before their wedding, albeit in a way that George wouldn't have known if it was a true confession or just another part of the show they put on for their loved ones, but George had said nothing in return. It was an act, that's all it had ever been, and he couldn't let his own feelings blind him to that fact. He would hold no bitterness toward George, he'd just force the feelings aside and move on from them.

Of course, that was so much more difficult in practice, but he needed to at least try. It wouldn't be good for Lily if this ended in a mess.

When George took his hand, the promise of *moving on* immediately left his mind and was instead replaced by butterflies and heart palpitations. It was easy to pretend that his sweaty palm was from the hot sun rather than the nerves that he felt.

He tugged the Brit along with him, George having a little more trouble gaining traction with his flippers on as they walked over the short stretch of sand to the water, but it wasn't long before they were ankle deep in the ocean. It was crystal clear, almost as if it had been left untouched by people until they'd stepped in, and with no one else in sight it was nothing less than magical. This bonny corner of the world, of paradise, was *theirs*.

They kept walking forward until the water came up past their knees, then their hips, and they were soon able to float rather than stand. Dream was reluctant to let go of George's hand but he felt his fingers trying to wiggle out of his grip, so he released him without another word.

"It's beautiful." George said, looking up at the sky. "There aren't even any clouds, it's *perfect*."

"We're snorkelling, you're supposed to look *down*." Dream teased, and when George looked to him with a smile he couldn't help but feel even warmer. He knew that the heat had nothing to do with the sun. George was *stunning*, and George was looking at him like *that*. The feelings were going to be impossible to get rid of if things continued this way, so rather than maintain eye contact any longer Dream rolled himself over in the water so he was lying on his front and pulled the mouthpiece of his snorkel so that it sat between his lips. George did the same, and he waited until his husband was ready before he slowly let his head move underwater.

At first he could see their flippers, black with neon green highlights, but as he shifted his body a little further and raised his legs to the surface he was met with wondrous sights that he'd never thought possible.

The floor of the seabed wasn't far beneath them yet - there was a while before there would be a substantial increase in depth - but already there was coral as far as they could see. Underwater, everything had a slightly blue hue from a distance, and it wasn't until they started kicking slowly to move forward and closer to the wildlife that Dream could truly see the colours.

The coral was orange. It was orange, yellow and brown, and it looked like the cloud of ejecta from

a volcano frozen in time, or like strange alien bushes. The sun that shone through the waves left patterns across everything beneath them, lines of light moving as the pair disturbed the water. Crustaceans could be seen making the coral their home, dotting around on the seabed near the base of the reef. Other strange, but beautiful, sponges featured too. One was blue and large, the other narrow and yellow, but both utterly delightful. As they swam out further, never really straying far from each other's side, the features became bigger. Dream wanted to swim deeper to get closer, but with a snorkel to breathe it wasn't exactly an option. He couldn't just shout to George about everything he saw either, though they had a two hour drive back to their hotel that he could spend excitedly talking about everything that they saw.

Of course, it wasn't all about seeing corals. Schools of fish swam around too, keeping their distance from the pair but not particularly afraid of them. The group they spotted first almost looked purple from a distance, but red when they got closer. The glasseyes darted around in synchronised paths, looking for their prey and steering clear of predators. Harder to see were the blue-headed wrasse, which were tiny fish on their own but swam in dense enough schools to see. When they turned, Dream could see the vast array of colours that the fish of different sexes and ages took on: bright yellows, pinks, greys and metallic greens.

George pointed out a group of large fish swimming beside them - the yellowtail snappers much easier to see - and their scales appeared iridescent as they swam. Their bodies, while grey, almost looked rainbow in the right light.

They'd gone far enough from the shore now that the water was deep, and it was impossible to see the bottom. Rather than risk swimming out further and getting into any trouble, the pair made a silent decision to start heading back. Of course, they would swim the long way round to take in as much as they could, but putting themselves in danger whilst snorkelling wasn't exactly *high* on their list of things to do on their honeymoon.

And the return was just as fascinating as the outward journey was. Banded butterflies swam around them. They were a little smaller than Dream's hands, with black stripes covering their bodies and giving them their name. Somehow, Dream and George managed to swim straight through a school of slippery dick wrasses as they returned to shallower water.

It meant that when the two were upright and their snorkels were pulled away from their faces, they both made the same crude joke.

"I think I saw a dick in your trunks." George sniggered.

"I saw one in yours too - pretty sure it was smaller than mine." Dream retorted

They shared laughter, took their equipment back to the rental stand, dried off and changed before starting the long drive home. But this was their honeymoon, and Dream wasn't one to do things by halves, so when he drove into Havana rather than around the outskirts he saw George raising an eyebrow.

"Where are you taking us?" He asked. "I thought we were just going to have dinner at the hotel again."

"This isn't dinner." Dream said, his smile managing to widen even more than it already was. "It's something better."

"What is it?"

"I'm not *telling*." Dream scoffed. "It's a surprise!"

The surprise ended up being a table at the *Cabaret Parisien*, a show with bright outfits, bright lights and upbeat music. The pair ate dinner, George drank a cocktail or two - though it was still enough to get him slightly tipsy - and by the time the lights came up after the show ended their palms ached from clapping. They remained seated until most of the patrons had filtered out, and when back outside under moonlight and streetlight George seemed to be even more giddy than before.

"Dance with me?" He asked, extending a hand to Dream. With alcohol in his system his inhibitions were gone and it seemed to Dream that he didn't have a care in the world. When Dream took his hand and George immediately started trying to replicate the more complicated spins in the routines performed - spins that Dream had to put a quick stop to before he tripped over himself and broke an ankle - the younger just laughed. Muffled music came from buildings in the distance, where entertainment that would go on long into the night still continued, and despite being stopped George still wanted to dance.

"You're such a spoilsport." He pouted, his feet tapping away and his head bobbing side to side.

"I just don't want my husband in hospital." Dream told him, the word *husband* stopping George in his tracks. Rather than continuing trying to move in an unpredictable and erratic way, George instead leaned into Dream. He pressed his chin to his chest and looked up, his cheeks rosy and his smile wide.

“What?” Dream asked with a raised eyebrow, one arm wrapping around his waist to settle a hand on his hip and the other hand coming to lightly tap the end of his nose.

“I like it when you call me that.” George replied, and Dream felt himself turning a shade of pink. Of course George would say that after a couple of drinks.

“Good thing you *are* my husband, then.” Dream said, and George giggled.

“You’re my husband too.”

“I am.” Dream confirmed. “C’mon, let’s head back to the c--”

Cut off midway through his sentence, Dream felt lips pressing against his. George had managed to pull Dream closer to him in one swift moment, and the younger had barely had a moment to prepare himself before he felt a tongue pushing against his lips. Hands found his hair, pulling on the tie that held it in place and undoing it to let his locks fall either side of his face. Dream felt himself battling with his own mind - partly tempted to pull back because George wasn’t completely sober, and partly wanting to go along with it because hell, they were *married*, and George had initiated it.

In the end he managed to reach a compromise. He didn’t deepen the kiss, he kept his hands resting on George’s waist rather than moving elsewhere, but he enjoyed himself. George’s hands *did* roam, and after Dream felt their lips separate he felt the hands in his hair fall lower.

Before George could do anything he would regret when sober, Dream took an urgent course of action. Instead of holding George he moved his hands beneath his armpits and wiggled his fingers just enough to tickle him, and when George jumped back with a squeal that quickly became laughter he offered out a hand.

“Come on.” Dream said. “You’ve had a long day, let’s get you to bed.”

“Bed’s far.” George complained, taking Dream’s hand in his and leaning his head against his shoulder as the two began to walk.

“Then you can sleep in the car. I’ll carry you in when we get back to the hotel.”

“I like that.” George said. “I like you.”

“I know you do, George.” Dream replied, and he heard George mutter something beneath his breath but the words were too scrambled for him to make them out. “What was that?”

“It was nothing.” George’s mumblings were a little louder this time. “You’re right. Let’s go back.”

Dream didn’t dare look to the side, worried what he’d see if he did. George sounded quieter in that moment and he wondered what those softly spoken words had been. If they’d been something important, something that Dream needed to know but George was too afraid to say aloud. He wouldn’t push him any further - not as a friend or a husband - and he’d let him have the space he needed. He had the rest of his life to say what he wanted to say, and Dream would wait all that time if he had to.

George was practically asleep by the time they got back to the car, with Dream having to fasten his seatbelt for him as he rested his head against his window and started snoring softly almost immediately. It came with one advantage, on the short drive back to their hotel: Dream got to steal secret, quick glances at George every so often. He got to admire the lashes of his eyes, the pink of his lips, and the tan that was starting to show on his shoulders and clavicle. The stars were no match for George, nor was the sunset or the ocean. George was a wonder all of his own and there was nothing that could ever compare.

As promised, Dream carried him to their bedroom. He placed George on their bed, wrapping blankets around him before going to the bathroom and changing into his own pyjamas. While he brushed his teeth he glanced down to their suitcases, tucked away in the corner, and sighed at the turned off phones. They’d promised not to call, but what he wouldn’t give to hear the voice of *someone* else. Someone that he could finally admit the truth to, say how stupid he’d been in coming up with this plan and tell them that he was now truly in love and had been for a while. Maybe they’d help him snap out of it.

And then, *of course*, he missed Lily. George had been away in England once, he’d been apart from her before, but this was his first time without his daughter since he’d found her. It felt wrong not to have her in his arms, it felt like he was missing out. By the time they returned home she would be weaning and Dream felt as if he was missing the last real days of her being a *baby*. Of course, she was growing every day, but moving onto solid foods felt like a big step.

He turned his phone on briefly, not looking at any of the notifications that pinged up. He typed out one quick message to his mother - *‘I miss Lily, give her a kiss and tell her I love her’* - then he shut it straight back off. It helped. He felt better. And the flash of her face (and George’s) that he’d seen

when his lockscreen had lit up reminded him of why he'd done all this. Why he'd married George despite having unspoken feelings for him. He'd done it for his daughter, and however much it hurt to know that he loved George with all of his heart without so much as an ounce of that feeling being mutual, he'd do it all over again for her.

Dream eventually slunk into bed, crawling in beside his husband, and when the older rested his head on his chest he didn't make any move to pull back. This was a honeymoon after all. He could live with the complicated thoughts and feelings that filled his mind for now, it would be easier when they got back home and things could return to a routine. To normal.

It had to be easier then.

###

While a week wasn't a long time to really indulge in the culture of another Nation, Dream was desperate to make the most of it. He worked a lot even before all this had happened, and even if he and George had just been friends he'd have wanted to make the most of this trip. It was why, on the fourth day of their honeymoon, they were up at the crack of dawn and driving across Cuba once again. The island was mostly low, but there were mountains scattered across it, and Dream had found a trail up *Pan De Guajaibon* that would take them nearly seven-hundred meters above sea level, giving them a view that would stretch for miles. The trail itself was mostly flat - a 4 mile walk in through dense forest - with a brief, steep interlude about a mile long that took them to the summit.

The day was beautiful, the sky was clear once more, and they started early enough that they didn't need to worry about overheating. Much like their afternoon in the Bay of Pigs, no one else was walking the trail. It meant that after the ascent - that had left both of them breathless on multiple occasions - they were the only two at the summit. The only ones taking in the view before them.

"We made it!" George exclaimed, panting heavily as they emerged from the bushes. There was no more uphill, and neither of them could deny the relief that flowed through their bodies.

"We did." Dream agreed, his voice quieter as he sat himself down in the long grass. He leaned back against a boulder, closing his eyes for a moment as he caught his breath. In a minute, when he'd had a chance to rest, he'd reopen them and look at the view. He knew it was going to be spectacular, but he also knew that if he looked at it now he'd hate it.

"It's windier up here than I expected it to be." George said, and Dream let one eye open up then. He glanced at his windswept husband, then closed his eye once more, humming in agreement.

“It’s not windy if you’re sitting down.”

“I guess I’ll just have to come and sit with you then.”

Dream didn’t even have a moment to open his eyes to look at George and ask what he meant when he felt his body leaning against him. Rather than question it, Dream just stayed quiet and he let one hand move so that it rested against George’s shoulder. It was comfortable and he enjoyed the closeness they shared - it felt like with George beside him he caught his breath a lot faster and managed to open his eyes to look around before too long.

While it had been cloudless on the ascent, Dream could now see one single cloud bubbling far on the horizon. The imperfection was a blemish on an otherwise blue sky but didn’t bother him in the slightest. He instead admired the mountains around them and, in the other direction, the ocean. It really was as if they could see everything.

“Y’know Dream...” George piped up, and suddenly his attention was focused entirely on the man resting against him. “Even if none of this is real, I’m glad we took a honeymoon. I’m glad we got to see all this together.”

“Yeah.” Dream agreed, his stomach in knots just as it was every time George reminded him that none of it was real. “I’m glad we did too. And it makes Sapnap jealous as a bonus.”

“He can be jealous. You’re mine.” George teased, and Dream forced out a laugh. If only George knew the power he held when he spoke words like that, if only he knew about the knife that twisted in his heart when he called him *his* so soon after saying none of it was real. This charade was going to kill him.

“I think he’s jealous that you’re *mine*.” Dream countered, and George just scoffed. Nothing more was said as they admired the view - nothing more needed to be said. They just sat side by side, the wind blowing through the grass and through their hair, and they looked, enjoying their surroundings and each other’s company. After a few minutes Dream opened up his rucksack, taking out turrone for the two of them to quietly enjoy. Once they’d eaten and had something to drink they took a couple of pictures - some of the view, some of themselves - and they began to head back down. The descent was much quicker than the ascent and before long they were on the flat trail back to the village their hike had begun in.

With only a few more days until they flew home and went back to normality, they still had plenty

to do to make the most of their time in Cuba. They planned to visit museums in the city and eat anything and everything they came across - until they were so full they could explode - before spending their last day soaking in the sun on the beach and relaxing.

When the final day came they'd spent so much of the last week on their feet that they were both happy to pull on their swimming trunks again and make the short walk to the beach before setting down a towel over the sand and falling back with ungraceful flops. The day began perfectly fine, with sunglasses over their eyes and the sound of the waves almost lulling them both back to sleep. As the morning marched on more people came down to the silver sands and the blue water, finding spots to make themselves comfortable. Families descended, children began to whoop and laugh as they played in the waves and in the sand, and the peaceful final day that they'd imagined came to an end.

Dream sat up first, with George tilting his head a little to look at him rather than moving.

"Did you enjoy it?" Dream asked, looking out to the horizon. "We don't have to call it a honeymoon." He muttered, his hand playing with his ring. "But, did you like it?"

"It was a brilliant week, Dream." George said. "Whatever you want to call it. A honeymoon, a holiday, we had fun. I miss Lily, though. I wish your parents had booked for her to come too."

"Hey, this was a team effort, your parents could've booked her in." Dream pointed out, and George gave Dream the courtesy of lifting up his sunglasses as he rolled his eyes. "We'll be home tomorrow, I call first cuddle. I've done all the driving this week."

"I don't have a license, you *always* do all the driving."

"Good point. I get first cuddles until she decides she's too grown up for cuddles anymore."

George let out a quiet laugh, propping himself up on his elbows to sit up just a little.

"It feels weird saying that." Dream admitted, turning his attention back to the ocean. "We didn't plan any of this. You just came to visit for a few weeks and she fell into our lives. It's been so long, yet it feels like no time at all. Nothing's changed and everything has. And one day she's going to be all grown up and..." He paused, letting out a breath as he thought. "Doesn't it feel strange? That she's growing up every day and we can't even see it when it's happening, but then suddenly you look back and she's not the same little girl we found on our doorstep."

“That’s what happens.” George said. “It’s weird. I don’t think I’ve ever thought about it, though. I mean, she’s just our baby.”

“But she won’t *always* be our baby.”

“Do you think one day she’ll fake marry her best friend?” George laughed, and Dream faltered. He’d told himself all honeymoon - and he’d told himself every single day since they’d decided to get married - that he’d get rid of his feelings for George. They were best friends, nothing more, and yet his dreams of the future - where Lily grew up and became her own person - all featured him by his side.

He couldn’t picture a life without George.

“We can find you a real partner, then.” Dream said, his eyes scanning the beach rather than horizon and not turning to look back at him. He didn’t want to. The idea of looking at George while joking about him finding a real partner - someone he really *did* love - hurt too much to bear. “Seen any girls you fancy? Maybe there’s someone back in Florida that you haven’t gotten the courage to talk to, I could help set you up, or maybe there’s a girl here... I mean, it’s our last night so that’s not really enough time to set up the foundations of a relationship but--”

Dream heard a shifting beside him, and when he turned his head to look at George he spotted that the man was getting to his feet.

“George?”

“Shut up.” The Brit said immediately, cutting him off before he even had a chance to ask what was wrong. “You’re an idiot, y’know that?” George’s voice wavered slightly, but Dream wasn’t left with enough time to intervene. “And maybe I am too. Maybe I’m the bigger idiot.” Dream *swore* he heard a snuffle. “You don’t know what the hell you’re talking about, and sometimes that’s *fine* because I don’t know what the hell you’re saying either, but I know what you’re saying right now and I get it. This is it, the plan’s done, Lily’s got you and she’s got me as a backup dad but you’re trying to--” He paused, but Dream knew better than to say anything. Whatever he said, it would be wrong.

Except George didn’t continue speaking, he just stood where he was, so Dream stood up too and dared to say *something*.

“I’m just trying to do what’s best--”

“What’s *best*?!” George raised his voice. A few heads turned to look at them, and George immediately quietened again. “You don’t know anything about what’s *best*. Not for me.”

“George, *please*, talk to me--” Dream scrambled for his words quickly. “I don’t understand what’s wrong, what’s triggered this?” He asked. “This isn’t like you, you’re--”

“Not *like me*? Dream, you clearly don’t know a thing about me.” George looked over his shoulder, his arms crossing his chest. “You’re telling me that this isn’t like me just moments after you ask me if I’ve seen any girls I like? I *married you*, and you still think I’m even remotely interested in--”

“You never told me!” Dream exclaimed, quickly figuring out what he meant. “George, I’m not a mind reader!”

“You didn’t have to be a mind reader to figure that out, Dream, you just needed to look at me. You didn’t even have to do that, and you haven’t. This whole time we’ve been pretending and you didn’t even notice.”

Dream swallowed. He thought he’d been doing alright. He thought he’d done a good job of looking after Lily and being a father to her whilst being a fiancé to George - whilst being his best friend - but apparently at some point his own feelings had clouded that judgement. He must’ve been too focused on making sure he didn’t love George and not focused enough *on* George.

“George--” His voice broke as he spoke his name, but George just shook his head.

“I’m going for a walk.” He said in response. “I’ll be back at the hotel later if you need me.”

“George!” Dream said again, louder this time as he turned his back and began to walk away, but there wasn’t a response. He didn’t turn his head, didn’t so much as flinch, and Dream didn’t know what to do. They’d never argued like this before. Sure they’d had disagreements over the little things, but this wasn’t a little thing. This was a big thing, and Dream had jumped to conclusions and hurt George, and he didn’t know what to say or do to make it better.

He stood dumbfounded for a few moments, watching George leave the beach and start to walk in the opposite direction of their hotel, before he grabbed the towel on the ground and started to head back himself. Already his mind was racing, and by the time he'd made it back to their room he'd come to one very painful conclusion.

Dream was utterly in love with George. And he couldn't take that back. He couldn't change it, he couldn't shake it, he couldn't deny it any longer. He loved George and he'd fucked up not just their marriage, but possibly their *friendship*, because he thought that finding George another partner would be an easier way to let go. He might have ruined everything just because he'd been more focused on getting rid of his own feelings than his friend. He felt sick to his stomach, he was furious with himself, and there was only really one thing he could do as he waited for George to come back to their room so they could talk.

He went into the bathroom, locking the door behind him and grabbing his phone from where it sat on top of his suitcase. Most of their things were already packed away as their flight was early in the morning and they didn't want to rush, and it meant now that it was easy to find his charger and voltage converter. He plugged his phone in as he turned it on, not remembering how much power it had the last time he'd checked it, and he waited for it to load.

The minute it took felt like an hour and George still wasn't back. He hadn't taken his phone with him, so Dream had no way of contacting him if he didn't show up, but George wasn't the person he was trying to reach right now.

His thoughts didn't stop coming as he loaded up his contacts, and by the time he managed to click on the call button next to the name he was looking for his fingers were shaking. He'd fucked up. He'd fucked up with George before he'd even had a chance for things to work with him and he didn't know how to fix it.

"Pick up..." Dream whispered to himself, ignoring how his voice cracked. "Please, *please*, I need you."

"Dream?" The voice came across after the fourth ring, it was quiet and sounded tired, but it was an answer all the same and he didn't care.

"Sapnap--" He breathed, feeling a sob catching in his throat. "Fuck, Sapnap--"

"Dream, what's wrong?" Sapnap's voice was much more alert now, and Dream didn't hold back the next sob. "Dream, has something happened?! I'm turning on the news, are you okay?!"

“I fucked up.” Dream managed to reply, his free hand pinching the bridge of his nose as another sob tore its way from his chest. “I fucked up. I fucked up everything.”

“Dream, deep breaths, calm down, you’re okay. Just breathe, then tell me what’s going on.”

“I’m in fucking love with my husband, Sapnap!” Dream yelled down the phone, and as he breathed in he heard himself pant. Somehow he managed to turn on the speaker setting, placing his phone on the side as he leaned back against the wall and slid down to the floor with his head in his hands. “I’m in love with George. I’m in love with him and I’ve fucked everything up.”

“I’m sure you haven’t. We’ve all been best friends for years and the two of you got married, that’s not the sort of relationship you can easily fuck up! You’d have to have done something *really* stupid to do that.”

“The marriage was fake, Sapnap. We got married so George could get a visa to come take care of Lily, he doesn’t love me, but I loved him. I *love* him. I tried to make it go away and in doing that I completely missed so many signs.”

There was silence for a moment, presumably from Sapnap taking in everything he was hearing for the first time, but it still haunted Dream. His chest felt empty and his vision was blurry, tears falling down his cheeks as he started to play with his wedding ring once more. He didn’t like feeling this way - out of control, unable to fix things - and not hearing his friend made it worse.

“Sapnap... I asked if there were any women he’d seen that he liked. I thought if he found someone else that he loved then there’d be a reason to end the marriage and he’d move on and I could forget about my feelings and everything would be okay. I thought it would fix everything but he got angry, he shouted, he said I wasn’t even looking at him. I got lost in my own feelings and I forgot about him and I think I’ve fucked everything up.” He whimpered. “I love him.”

“Have you told him you love him?” Sapnap asked slowly. “And I mean, *actually* told him. You guys put on one hell of a convincing show, I thought it was real, everyone did. If you’ve told him you love him, did he know that you were saying it as you rather than as part of the act?”

“I don’t know.” He croaked. “I think it’s too late.”

“It’s not too late, give it time. If George has been feeling like this for a while and he’s just snapped

then he's gonna need some time to cool off, who knows how long it's been building, but when you're back home you can try talking to him about it. Tell him the truth."

"What if he hates me?" Dream asked.

"Well then he's gonna hate you either way, but wouldn't you rather everything ended with the truth out? I know you, Dream, and if this ends without you putting all your cards on the table then you'll always say *what if*, you'll always regret it. I promise you, George won't hate you, but you need to do this. I can come back to Florida and babysit, give you some space to talk without worrying about Lily."

Dream took in a breath, letting it out and feeling more tears fall. They were hot against his cheeks, and his nose was beginning to feel stuffy. "I want to say yes." He said. "But I can't stop crying. I can't stop thinking that I've ruined it all."

"You can keep crying." Sapnap reassured him. "If you need it, that's fine, but I'm here for you whenever you're ready to talk to George. I can't imagine pretending not to be in love with the man you're marrying is easy, even less so when he's one of your best friends, you must both be feeling like utter shit right now. Let it all out, I'll stay on the call with you as long as you need."

"Thanks, Sapnap." Dream muttered quietly, muffling another sob.

"When you *actually* get married, though, I'm making this conversation my speech as your best man."

Dream almost laughed at Sapnap's words, but he did as his friend suggested. He kept crying. He wasn't sure how long he cried for - he just knew that when he ended the call with Sapnap they'd been talking for three hours. It was after lunch but Dream couldn't find it in himself to be hungry. He turned his phone off again, tidied away his things, and he went to sit on the bed. He needed George to come back so he could say sorry. Even if it wasn't a proper apology, even if they didn't talk about it, he *needed* to say sorry.

At some point when he'd been waiting, Dream had fallen asleep. He only knew this because when he woke up it was dark outside and George was curled up on the sofa, a blanket taken from the bed and pulled tightly around him.

Dream didn't risk waking him up to say sorry. That in itself felt like an excuse for another

argument.

It did mean, though, when they ate breakfast the next morning, nothing had been addressed. It meant that when they drove to the airport, nothing was said. It meant that when they sat on the plane they both put their headphones on and ignored each other.

It meant that as they flew over the Florida Keys, Dream struggled to keep his anxiety at bay. He knew he'd messed up and the more time that past the less he knew how to start fixing it.

He just hoped that when the time was right, it would still be something he could fix

Chapter End Notes

uh-oh, first big argument... not a great ending to a honeymoon...

hey, just under 6 weeks, that's better than average update times ;D hope you guys don't hate me too much for coming back with a spoonful of drama! they'll be back home with lily soon, & that means fluff! right?

if you enjoyed, be sure to leave a comment & kudos! it always makes my day :D thank you for reading, & thank you as always for being patient for an update <3

End Notes

look at this cute shit, i need to go punch a wall to feel manly again!!!! >:(

as always, thanks for reading! hmu on [twitter](#) or join my [discord server](#) if you'd like to come yell at me! & this fic now has a playlist, too, check it out on [spotify](#)!

Edit: changed it to a t because these bois are pining & swearing so we'll play it safe lol

Works inspired by this [one](#) by [Sofyzin \(orphan_account\)](#), [doorbell \(could you get that for me, please?\)](#) by [InPrisonForSparkling](#)

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!